

Ankara, Tehran agree to cooperate on border security

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey and Iran agreed Wednesday to cooperate on border security during a visit here by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohsen Emini-zad, the Anadolu news agency reported. A direct telephone link will be installed between the armies on both sides of their shared border to enable "effective" cooperation between the two countries, the agency said. A meeting will take place next week to determine who will be responsible for the line on each side and to make the line operational. Ankara has frequently criticised Iran for "closing its eyes" to border infiltration by rebels from the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), a charge which Tehran has denied.

Jordan Times

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Chechen president introduces Islamic law

MOSCOW (AP) — Meeting a key demand of his opponents, Chechnya's president on Wednesday ordered the establishment of Islamic law in the breakaway republic, sharply curtailing parliament's powers and ordering that an Islamic constitution be written. President Aslan Maskhadov signed several decrees Wednesday, ordering the establishment of "full-scale" Islamic law, effective immediately. Russian news agencies reported, Maskhadov revoked parliament's legislative functions and ordered the body to cooperate with Muslim leaders to write an Islamic constitution within three months.

Turkish court files case against Kurd party

DIYARBAKIR (R) — Turkey's constitutional court on Wednesday opened a case to outlaw the country's main Kurdish party for alleged links to Abdullah Ocalan's guerrilla group, Anadolu news agency said. The charges were brought by headline Chief Prosecutor Vural Savas, who accused the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) of recruiting guerrillas for the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), which has fought a 14-year armed campaign for Kurdish self-rule. HADEP advocates a peaceful resolution to the conflict which has cost more than 29,000 lives.

U.S. judge denies new hearing for death row inmate

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A U.S. federal judge rejected Wednesday a request for a new clemency hearing for a death row inmate on the eve of the man's scheduled execution for three killings committed when he was 16 years old. Sean Sellers, 29, was scheduled to die by lethal injection early Thursday at the southern U.S. Oklahoma State Penitentiary for the shooting deaths of his mother, stepfather and a convenience store clerk in Oklahoma City.

'As many 4,000 U.S. troops may go to Kosovo'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States may contribute as many as 4,000 troops to a NATO ground force in Kosovo if the warring sides reach a peace settlement, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday. Army General Henry Shelton said the size of the force will depend on what kind of peace agreement is reached between Belgrade and the KLA, but he said the U.S. goal was to have the Europeans provide most troops. Shelton said no exit date should be set going into a deployment in Kosovo, as the administration initially did in Bosnia, raising the prospects for a long-term commitment of U.S. forces in the southern Serbian province.

8 killed in Indian tribal violence

NEW DELHI (AP) — Out-lawed tribal guerrillas clashed with rival groups in northeastern India and set fire to huts Wednesday, leaving eight people dead and flames raging through villages, domestic news agencies reported. Nearly 25 armed members of the National Liberation Front of Tripura swooped on a village in the Tripura state late on Tuesday killing four people and wounding two others, Press Trust of India reported. The killings came in a series of sporadic flare-ups of violence between tribal and non-tribal groups in the thickly forested

House 'partially' lifts deputy's immunity

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday voted in favour of "partially" lifting the immunity of Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi to allow security authorities to interrogate him on rape charges, the first such decision in the history of Parliament.

The move, approved by 42 out of 64 lawmakers present during the discussion, allows the public prosecutor to interrogate Abbadi but denies him the right to detain the deputy or remand him to court.

It followed a recommendation by the House Legal Committee proposing a partial lifting of immunity.

Two sisters, aged 14 and 20, pressed charges in November against Abbadi claiming that he had raped them.

The public prosecutor wrote to Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh demanding that the 80-member Lower House lift the deputy's immunity to allow for his

interrogation.

Earlier this week, Parliament requested a clarification from the Higher Council for the Interpretation of the Constitution as to the legality of a partial lifting of immunity following protests from lawmakers, who said that the recommendation to lift immunity was interfering in the judicial process.

During Wednesday's session, House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali told deputies that the decision to refer the case to the council was illegal because it had not been approved by the majority of the lawmakers during Sunday's session. The referral of the case to the council was approved by a simple majority of 33 out of 65.

Abbadi told his colleagues that the case was lodged against him by "influential politicians" who were upset by his political stands.

"It is a set-up case by certain people whom I know very well and whose identities I will reveal," Abbadi, known for his controversial



Members of the Lower House of Parliament meet Wednesday to discuss lifting a colleague's immunity (Petra photo)

political stands, said during the session. He urged his colleagues not to take a long time in dis-

cussing the issue and to vote either to reject or approve the recommendation. The decision to lift the

immunity took everyone by surprise following heated debates over the past 10 days between lawmakers.

Arafat, Albright hold talks on 'revolving door' for prisoners

WASHINGTON (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat affirmed Wednesday his intention of carrying out the stalled West Bank accords with Israel.

"I am insistent on following up the peace process," Arafat told reporters after a 40-minute meeting with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The process is stalled, with Israel refusing to yield more land until the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) imposes tougher restraints on "terrorism" and prosecutes suspects.

On another touchy subject, he said Palestinian leaders were grappling with the question of a Palestinian state. "This can't be mentioned now," Arafat said.

The Palestinian leader got a boost before arriving, though, when the State Department announced it had no evidence to support Israeli accusations that suspects in attacks on Americans had been set free.

"Those charges, so far as we can tell, are simply not proven by any evidence," State Department spokesman James Rubin said Tuesday.

Concerns about whether "terrorist" suspects are treated leniently by Palestinian authorities also were raised by Albright at her meeting with Arafat, Rubin said.

They also surveyed the stalled West Bank process and agreed to hold a meeting in mid-February of a joint U.S.-Palestinian commission to develop trade, scientific and cultural ties, Rubin said.

While Rubin disputed Israel's assertion, he said that

"with respect to other related issues of larger numbers of people in the revolving door, let me say that we do have concerns."

The "revolving door" is a reference to Israeli claims that suspects are detained and then quietly let go.

Another touchy issue is Arafat's periodic declarations that the Palestinians will establish a state whatever the outcome of negotiations with Israel.

Senator Sam Brownback said he would introduce a resolution opposing the unilateral declaration of a state. It would violate Palestinian-Israeli understandings "and the United States should not recognise any such declaration," Brownback said.

Arafat was meeting with Albright and members of Congress Wednesday, and hoped to have a few minutes with President Bill Clinton at a prayer breakfast Thursday.

His participation has sparked complaints by some Christian fundamentalists. Randy Tate, executive director of the Christian Coalition, said he would boycott the breakfast. To attend, Tate said, "would provide legitimacy to an unrepentant terrorist who has the blood of thousands on his hands."

Similarly, Thad Pinney, communications director for the Traditional Values Coalition, which represents 40,000 churches, said: "We are encouraging congressmen to boycott the breakfast because Arafat is an unrepentant terrorist."

(Continued on page 7)

Weizman cuts terms for Israelis who killed Arabs

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman cut the prison sentences Wednesday of three Israelis jailed for murdering Palestinians and two others convicted of the attempted murder of an Arab, his office announced.

Acting at the demand of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government, Weizman notably commuted the life sentence of Ami Popper, who killed seven Palestinian labourers in a 1990 shooting spree near Tel Aviv, to 40 years.

The president agreed to reduce the sentences of Israelis involved in anti-Arab attacks in the same way that he has cut the terms of Palestinians who carried out anti-Israeli attacks," said Arie Shumner, Weizman's chief of staff.

Israeli Arab lawmaker Talib Al Sana said that the president applied a double standard.

"An Arab prisoner that didn't kill a single Jew had his sentence reduced to 40 years," Al Sana said. "And today we hear, for example, that Ami Popper who killed seven Arabs had his sentence

reduced to 40 years. That's a discriminatory approach." Ibrahim Abu Dakka, whose son was killed by Popper, said the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) should seek his extradition.

"The very idea of reducing the sentence of those killers is an ugly crime. It is an affront to those who were martyred," Abu Dakka, 65, told Reuters.

The partial pardons were requested by Justice Minister Tsahi Hanegbi and came just three months before general elections in which Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party is seeking to rally support of the Israeli far-right.

Weizman's order reduced by four years the 15-year sentence of Yoram Skolnik, who was jailed in 1993 for shooting a bound Palestinian man who had been captured after stabbing a Jewish settler in the West Bank.

Skolnik was originally jailed for life but Weizman already commuted the sentence to 15 years.

Nehemia Michbaum, who killed a Palestinian man by throwing a handgrenade into a market in the Old City of

Arab east Jerusalem in 1992, had his term reduced from 12 years to 10 years.

Also benefiting from Wednesday's decision were two brothers, Yehodav and Eitan Kahalani, who were sentenced to 12 years in prison for the attempted murder of a Palestinian and had their terms cut to eight years.

In justifying his request for the presidential pardons, Hanegbi said that in recent years "thousands of Palestinian prisoners convicted of anti-Israeli attacks had been released."

"That's why I felt it justified to recommend the reduction of prison sentences of Jews condemned for anti-Arab attacks," he said, adding that all the Israeli prisoners had "expressed regret" for their actions.

"What the government and the justice minister did here was set one principle for Jewish murderers and another for Arab murderers. This is unacceptable," said Israeli legislator Yossi Sarid of the leftist Meretz Party.

(Continued on page 7)

Crown Prince receives message from Holy See

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Abdullah, the Regent, has received a congratulatory message sent on behalf of Pope John Paul II on his designation as heir to the Throne.

In the message, delivered by the Apostolic Nuncio in the Kingdom to the Jordan Times on Wednesday, Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano assured the Crown Prince of the prayers of the Pope John Paul "for the well-being of the people of Jordan and for the peace and security of all the peoples of the Middle East."

The Regent yesterday also received representatives of Arab and foreign leaders, who congratulated him on his appointment as successor to the Throne.

Prince Abdullah received a cable from Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov,

who stressed the two countries' friendship and cooperation.

The Crown Prince received Mauritanian Prime Minister Sheikh Aia Weld Mohammed Khouna, UAE Ambassador Ahmad Ali Meil Zu'abi, Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Ali Subhani, U.S. Ambassador William Burns, German Ambassador Peter Meude, Swiss Confederation Ambassador Gian Federico Pedotti, French Ambassador Bernard Emié and Belgian Ambassador Philippe Kums.

The Regent Wednesday sent a congratulatory cable to Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga on the occasion of her country's national day.

Prince Abdullah is expected to receive Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon here on Sunday for talks.



Henam, the daughter of Yousef Abu Dakka, who was killed with another six Palestinians by Israeli Ami Popper in an indiscriminate shooting in 1990, shows a portrait of her father at her home at Khan Younes in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

U.N. General Assembly to meet on Israel settlements

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. General Assembly is to meet in emergency session Friday to vote on a new condemnation of Israel's settlement policy and prospects for a U.N. conference.

U.N. General Assembly spokeswoman Jadranka Mihalich told AFP that the emergency special session would be held at the request of Jordan, on behalf of Arab states, and South Africa for the non-aligned.

The draft resolution obtained by AFP reiterates a U.N. condemnation of "the failure of the government of Israel to comply" with earlier assembly resolutions calling for an immediate halt to the building of new settlements.

The resolution comes under the heading of "Illegal Israeli Actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian territory."

But Western diplomats said that the draft's most contro-

versial point concerns a proposal for a conference on the protection of Palestinians to be held on March 4 either at U.N. headquarters in New York or in Geneva.

The conference, which was first requested by a General Assembly resolution in November 1997, would be attended by the parties to the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war.

The last experts' meeting

aimed at preparing for the proposed conference was held in Geneva last October.

Washington remains opposed to fixing any date for such an international conference, pointing to the timing of such an event just ahead of Israeli elections in May, Western diplomats said.

The United States insists that the issue of a Middle East settlement should be kept out of the United Nations, and an agreement negotiated between the parties themselves.

Diplomats said that the 15-nation European Union, which usually plays a key role in General Assembly resolutions on the Middle East, was still attempting to reach a unified final position regarding the draft resolution.

One proposal under discussion was for the resolution to call for the conference to be convened "as soon as possible," a Western diplomat said.

'Smooth' change of succession underlines strength of country's institutions, analysts say

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — As HRH Crown Prince Abdullah, the Regent, moved to assume his new responsibilities as second in line to the Throne, Jordanians anxiously await good news of His Majesty King Hussein's health.

The Monarch, the region's longest-serving ruler, will remain under close monitoring for the next two weeks after Tuesday's bone marrow transplant, but officials said first indications were positive.

"We are praying to God to save His Majesty... and to end the state of anxiety and confusion gripping

us since he returned to the U.S. for renewed treatment," wrote Sultan Hattab in the mass-circulation daily Al Ra'i.

The King was rushed back to the Mayo Clinic in the United States on Jan. 25, a month after being discharged from the same hospital following six months of treatment for non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

Hours before he left Amman, the King designated his eldest son, Prince Abdullah, as Crown Prince and relieved HRH Prince Hassan from his duties after grooming him for 34 years. In a letter to Prince Hassan, the King charged his younger brother with abuse of

power in his absence.

Officials said Prince Abdullah, an army major general, marched smartly into the affairs of state, heading a Cabinet session and meeting with scores of Arab and foreign dignitaries who flew in to congratulate him and offer their support.

Foreign guests included U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright — who revised her Middle East trip itinerary last week to reaffirm U.S. support for Jordan — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and a stream of Gulf Arab princes and sheikhs and the son of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

Prince Abdullah assured Arafat, grappling with a stalled peace process, that Jordan stands behind the Palestinian people.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu telephoned to congratulate the Crown Prince. With Israel facing elections this May and two-thirds of the electorate supporting peace, all camps are competing to prove their peace credentials with the Palestinians. Jordan and the United States, Netanyahu is coming to Amman on Sunday for talks with Prince Abdullah and senior officials.

Prince Abdullah's message to the region's leaders was that he will

continue King Hussein's policies. King Hussein has stayed in close contact with Prince Abdullah who is keeping him informed of developments at home, officials have said.

"It is an extraordinary time for us all, but things are running as smooth as they can, given the difficult situation," said a senior government official. "We have concerns but we are not worried about the future of the country," he told the Jordan Times, echoing commonly heard views in official circles.

"We have to be more forward-looking and we have to achieve

more national cohesion and improve our efficiency as these are our main challenges."

During a hectic week, the new Crown Prince welcomed and met with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, one of three senior Saudi officials who arrived in Amman in a strong show of support for Prince Abdullah.

The 37-year-old Prince has in recent years cultivated solid relations with the younger generation of Gulf princes, especially those in the military.

(Continued on page 7)

Defence minister pledges to strengthen settlements

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's defence minister wants to strengthen Jewish settlements in the coming months amid concerns that a more dovish government could come to power in May elections and impose a construction freeze, an advisor said Wednesday.

Moshe Arens, who was named to the defence post last month, won effusive praise from Jewish settler leaders. "The feeling is that, finally, we have our defence minister," settler leader Pinhas Wallerstein told Israel Radio.

All construction projects in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip need the approval of the defence minister.

Palestinian officials expressed concern about

Arens' plans.

"By the time we reach the elections, there will no longer be a peace process since the issue of the settlements is the most charged issue," said Nabil Amr, an advisor to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

The Palestinians hope to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza, and fear their chances become more remote with each house being built in the 144 Jewish settlements scattered throughout the disputed lands.

The United States has urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to freeze construction in the settlements, but to no avail.

Netanyahu says he only builds enough to accommo-

date natural growth, but Palestinians say settlement construction is part of a land grab.

Eli Cohen, an advisor to Arens on settlement affairs, told Israel Radio that the elections were of concern to the ministry and the settlers.

"The defence ministry intends to strengthen the settlements... as soon as possible, as much as possible, before May 17," Cohen said.

Cohen noted that after the dovish Labour Party came to power in 1992, it imposed restrictions on settlement constructions in hopes of paving the way for peace talks with the Palestinians.



An Iranian soldier watches a public television broadcast of the late Islamic revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini, filmed aboard the flight which brought Khomeini back to Iran in 1979 after years of living in exile in France. Iran launched Feb. 1 ten days of celebrations to mark the Islamic revolution's 20th anniversary (AFP photo).

Israel denies passing U.S. defence secrets to China

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel flatly denied on Wednesday U.S. press reports that it had given China secrets concerning U.S. anti-missile laser weapons.

The defence ministry, in a strongly worded statement, said the report which appeared last week in the Washington Times newspaper that Israel had given the Chinese secrets concerning the Nautilus laser system was "unfounded."

"Israel has never shared with foreign factors any restricted American technology obtained during a joint U.S.-Israeli effort to build a battlefield laser gun," the ministry said.

The ministry said the Washington Times article "apparently bases itself on

sources of the U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency" (DIA) and calls on the sources mentioned in the article "to find a way to publicly deny the accusations attributed to them."

Israel and the United States have been jointly developing the Nautilus laser gun for several years and the first of the weapons is expected to be deployed in Israel later this year.

Israel wants to use the laser to shoot down Katyushas — short range rockets used by guerrillas in neighbouring Lebanon to attack Israeli forces occupying the south of that country and communities in northern Israel.

The Washington Times reported that U.S. techni-

cians working on the project at the state defense firm Israel Aircraft Industries saw Chinese weapons experts working at the same plant in mid-1997 and reported this to the DIA.

Later a Chinese scientist reportedly revealed details of the Nautilus technology at an international symposium, raising DIA suspicions that Israel had leaked information to China, it said.

Meanwhile the Israeli newspaper Haaretz unveiled details Wednesday of the first China-Israel arms deals carried out secretly beginning in 1979.

According to the newspaper, then-prime minister Menachem Begin turned to an Israeli billionaire with

close trade ties to China, Shaul Eisenberg, to serve as middleman in the secret sale of massive amounts of weapons technology to Beijing.

A first delegation of Israeli defence experts flew to China in February 1979 for talks which led to the bilateral arms programme carried out under the code-name Olympia.

The sales concerned primarily the upgrading of Soviet weaponry — a field in which Israel excelled as it sought to counter Soviet-armed Arab armies.

Haaretz said Eisenberg made commissions of \$500 million on Israel's arms sales to China during the first half of the 1980s.

'American pilots scared'

BAGHDAD (AP) — American pilots patrolling the "no fly" zones are scared of a direct confrontation with Iraqi defences, the commander of Iraq's air defences says.

"The United States might have a superior air force, but the American pilot is scared and he chickens out once he is inside Iraqi airspace," Gen. Shahin Al Tikriti told Al Thawra, the ruling Baath Party newspaper, in an interview published Wednesday.

"He always tries to avoid confrontation with air defences by dropping his load far from the target and escaping," he said.

Iraq has been challenging U.S. and British enforcement of "no-fly" zones, particularly over the past month, by firing surface-to-air missiles at U.S. and British aircraft.

U.S. warplanes patrolling

the zones in northern and southern Iraq have fired on Iraqi air defense sites, although it is unclear the extent of damage they have inflicted. No planes have been hit.

The two zones were imposed by the Western allies after the 1991 Gulf War to protect Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south against possible attack by the Iraqi army.

Al Tikriti reiterated Iraq's rejection of the zones, which Iraq says violate its sovereignty and have no international standing. "These lines do not exist. They are a mirage," said the general, a native of President Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

On Monday, Saddam offered a reward of \$14,000 for any Iraqi who shoots down an American plane.

Russia, Kurd officials mute on Ocalan

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia and Kurdish officials in Moscow were mute on Wednesday over Turkish reports that fugitive Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan had again entered federation territory.

"We have no information about him staying in Moscow," a spokesman for the foreign ministry here told AFP. The Kremlin also refused to comment on the whereabouts of the wanted Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) leader.

The semi-official Anatolia news agency reported from Moscow on Tuesday that

Ocalan had arrived back to Russia after failing to find a country willing to accept him following his flight from Italy on Jan. 16.

Nadezhda Spiridonova, the Moscow-based spokeswoman for the Kurdish National Liberation Front in the former Soviet Union, dismissed the report.

"The [latest] version is that Ocalan is in the Russian capital, but there are also reports of his arrival in Armenia, Belarus, Libya, South Africa, Estonia, Greece, China, Cyprus and Scandinavia," she told the Interfax news agency.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish troops kill 11 Kurds

DIYARBAKIR (AP) — Troops killed 11 Kurdish rebels in clashes in southeastern Turkey, authorities said Wednesday. The fighting took place in the province of Hakkari, where the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Iran meet. Rebels of the Kurdistan Labour Party, or PKK, frequently carry out cross-border operations from Iran or northern Iraq in their battle for autonomy in southeast Turkey. Authorities did not say when the clashes occurred.

Iraqi official in Cairo for talks with Abdul Meguid

CAIRO (AFP) — A senior Iraqi government official arrived here Wednesday for talks with Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid on ways of improving ties between Iraq and the pan-Arab organisation. Nabil Najm, an undersecretary of state at the Iraqi foreign ministry, is carrying a response from the Iraqi leadership to a message Abdul Meguid sent Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, a League spokesman said.

Habash to visit Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) leader George Habash will visit Egypt later this month for the first time since relations between Cairo and the radical group broke down 30 years ago, it was reported Wednesday. The 74-year-old Habash will take part in a Feb. 21-23 conference here entitled "Zionism and Arab Resistance," said Helmi Shaarawi, director of the non-governmental Arab Research Center which is organising the seminar. The PFLP leader's last visit to Egypt was in 1969, one year before relations between Egypt and the Palestinian organisation were severed after Egyptian authorities arrested 140 militants from the PFLP and its rival Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

Taliban, U.S. hold rare meeting

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A rare meeting between Afghanistan's Taliban religious army and senior U.S. officials was being held in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad Wednesday. Neither the Taliban nor the Americans would say what was on the table, but it appeared likely that Saudi dissident and U.S. enemy No. 1, Osama Ben Laden, would top the agenda.

'Egyptians will never forgive me' if I visit Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian people "will never forgive me" if I visit Israel while holding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads the government, President Hosni Mubarak said in published statements Wednesday. Mubarak made the remarks Tuesday in a meeting with Jewish community leaders in Paris in reply to a question on why he did not visit Israel, the Cairo government press reported. "Today, if I travel to Israel my people will never forgive me because of the presence of someone like Netanyahu," Mubarak reportedly said.

WFP in nutrition appeal for Iraqi children

ROME (R) — The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) on Wednesday appealed to the international community to donate \$21 million to help Iraqis, many of them children, suffering from food shortages and poor water supply. About one million people are in need, including 200,000 acutely malnourished children, the Rome-based WFP said in a statement.

Iran draws 'red line' at negotiations with U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran draws a "red line" at negotiations with the United States which is just as clear cut as the bar on relations with Israel, the foreign ministry said here Wednesday. "This red line is clear: no relations with the Zionist regime [Israel] and no dialogue with the United States," ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said. Iran "considers the Zionist regime as illegitimate and rules out any negotiations with the United States because of their hostile attitude," he told the official IRNA news agency.

Kuwait shopping festival starts

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's first shopping festival got underway on Wednesday after a last-minute attempt by MPs to ban concerts during the extravaganza was rebuffed by the government. The government postponed an urgent motion submitted Tuesday by a group of 33 MPs, led by house speaker Ahmad Al Saadoun, to cancel six concerts to be staged during the three-week-long "Hala February 99" festival.

Hundreds demonstrate to support Hamas

NABLUS (AFP) — Hundreds of Palestinians took to the streets of Nablus Wednesday to call for the release of 50 members of the Islamic group Hamas on hunger strike in the West Bank city's prison, witnesses said.

The prisoners, nearly all of them members of Hamas or the smaller Islamic Jihad group, have been on hunger-strike for 12 days in the Jneid prison to protest their continued detention without trial, in some cases for up to a year.

Their supporters, mostly wives and children of the detainees, carried banners reading "Political detention is a betrayal of the Palestinian people" and "Close the prisoners' file" during Wednesday's protest, the witnesses said.

A flyer distributed by Hamas during the demonstration said that a joint delegation from the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian legislature had visited the hunger-strikers.

The delegation asked the hunger-strikers to call off

their protest and instead "to start a dialogue with the authority on the releases of political prisoners."

But the flyer said that the prisoners "had unanimously professed their determination to continue the strike until the dark file of political detentions is finally closed."

The PNA is estimated to be holding around 170 political prisoners without trial after releasing several dozen Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists to mark the religious festival of 'Eid Al

Fitr last month.

The most recent wave of arrests by the authority followed two suicide bomb attacks in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip soon after the signing of the U.S.-brokered Wye River land-for-security agreement with Israel in October.

Hamas's spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, himself started a hunger-strike on Monday in Gaza to show his solidarity with the Jneid protesters.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

16:10 Cartoon — Ace Venture

16:30 Doc. — The Science Show

17:00 French Programme

18:15 Sparks

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 French Programme

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 Comedy — Family Matters

20:00 Museums of the World

20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn the

Medicine Woman

21:15 Oprah Winfrey Show

22:00 News in English

22:30 Feature Film — "Sketch Artist"

23:59 End of T.N.

Friday Programmes

16:10 Cartoon — Animated Classics

16:30 Sinbad

17:00 French programme

18:30 The Simpsons

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 French Programme

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

20:00 Cinema, Cinema

20:30 Star Trek

21:15 D.V. — Full Circle

22:00 News in English

22:30 Drama — Millennium

23:10 Feature Film — "Mantana Moonshine"

23:59 End of T.N.

PRAYER TIMES

05:05 Fajr

06:24 (Sunrise) Dhuha

11:49 Dhuhur

14:49 'Asr

17:15 Maghreb

18:34 Isha

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweetish Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624594

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622666

Anglican Church Tel. 4624854/624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751

Amman International Church Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweetish Tel. 5920146

The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers. Temperatures are expected to drop and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be rainy and cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 05/13

Aqaba 12/21

Deserts 04/16

Jordan Valley 09/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 17, Aqaba 22

Humidity readings: Amman

59 per cent, Aqaba 68 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 04/10

Jerash 05/14

Um Qays 06/15

Madaba 04/13

Petra 04/14

Dead Sea 10/21

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Khalil Al-Tashug 4757253

Dr. Bahjat Bader 5332642

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 5350432

Dr. Wasfi Qaddumi 4893542

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Issam Al Sani 021246858

Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Nabhan (09)3851743

Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Blood Bank 4775121

Highway Police 5343402

Traffic office 4896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre 5856856

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4642816

Al-Khalid Maternity 4642411/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia planning to offer Jordan cheap oil

AMMAN (AFP) — Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are planning to provide Jordan with oil at a reduced price, a top Jordanian official told AFP Wednesday.

The move is "a sign of a new era of cooperation between Jordan and the two Gulf states," said the official who asked not to be named.

Jordan's Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Al Khatib is due in Kuwait on Saturday for

an official visit during which an announcement is expected on the reopening of Jordan's embassy there after eight years.

"Providing Jordan with oil will also be discussed during the visit," the official said.

A stream of Gulf officials have visited Amman to congratulate Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein since his appointment as heir to the Throne on Janu-

ary 25. Prince Abdullah's meetings with Gulf dignitaries allowed the Crown Prince, who has strong ties with the Gulf royal families, to "examine ways of developing bilateral cooperation in all fields," the Jordanian official said.

Saudi Arabia stopped exporting oil to Jordan in 1990 after Amman was seen to be supporting Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait.

Before that, Amman had received 10 per cent of its oil requirements from the Saudi oil company Tapline, the rest coming from Iraq.

Since the 1990-91 Gulf crisis the U.N. sanctions committee has allowed Jordan to import all of its oil — 90,000 barrels a day — overland by truck from Iraq.



Jordanian kids enjoy soccer in front of the Qala Roman ruins downtown Amman, Wednesday, Feb. 3rd, 1999. Life in Jordan has continued normally despite King Hussein undergoing bone marrow transplant at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, in the United States. (AP Photo/Laurent Rebours)

The water pipe: Fun but deadly

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Over the past few years, Jordanians have picked up arjeelah (water pipe) smoking as a pastime, showing a preference for what they perceive as "traditional" way of smoking and a less threatening habit than that of cigarette smoking.

The tradition of the water pipe has its roots in Turkey. It made its Arab World debut in the souks of Cairo and Damascus, then spread to Jordan and the Gulf.

Reem Saher, a young girl, says that she smokes the water pipe to fill an emotional gap in her life. "My father left us ten years ago to work in a Gulf country and he rarely comes to visit us," she says. "This left a big gap in our family's life, which my mother has tried to bridge, with no success. So, I tried to forget my sadness by smoking arjeelah in my spare time."

Others say that smoking the flavoured water pipe has become the centre-piece of social gatherings with friends.

"It has a different taste," says Ayman Sharabati, 25,

sitting with his friends in one of Amman's coffee shops. "We enjoy it more."

Nancy Ahmad, 29, adds that she was curious to try the pipe as most of her friends were arjeelah fans.

"Some of my friends encouraged me to try it, saying that it is less dangerous than cigarettes," she explains. "But actually I know that smoking the water pipe is more dangerous than smoking cigarettes."

"I believe that we live one life, whatever we do, so why not enjoy it the way we want?" she added.

Nadia Lutfy, an employee at a company in Amman, quips that her husband is responsible for her addiction to the "hookah."

"In the past, he used to go out with friends to smoke the water pipe and leave me at home alone, so I asked a friend who was going to Egypt to buy me an expensive and luxurious water pipe," she recounts. "After that, I started preparing the water pipe at home and smoke it with my husband."

However, Muath Ozaizi, a doctor at one of the country's state run hospi-

tals in Amman, says that he fears arjeelah smoking is on the rise because of a common perception among people that the "traditional way of smoking tobacco derivatives is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes."

'I believe that we live one life, whatever we do, so why not enjoy it the way we want?'

"As a result, some people quit smoking cigarettes and switched to water pipe," he says.

"But the method of burning the tobacco and the continuity of the flame above the reddish-ashy coal renders a large amount of smoke containing an abundant quantity of carbon monoxide, a leading killer agent," says Ozaizi. "The carbon monoxide emitted from the hookah is five times higher than that from cigarettes," he adds.

"Carbon monoxide,

nicotine and tar in water pipes are well proven to be the major cause of complicated diseases, like myocardial infarction (M.I.), cerebrovascular accidents, cancer, early death and also decreases lipids," Ozaizi told the Jordan Times.

"Recently, it was proved that nicotine is an addictive material that increases blood pressure and causes the M.I.," says Ramzi Mazawi, member of the Jordan Medical Association.

"Most of the people think that nicotine of the arjeelah is dissolved and reduced by water," Ozaizi says. "These deadly materials will not be reduced or dissolved by passing through water."

"All scientific experiments emphasise that tobacco is a slow killer, and with added materials in [water pipe tobacco], like the 'muasel' (a mixture of tobacco, honey and different flavours and chemical additives) it becomes an even faster killer," Ozaizi warns.

Parliament urges government to aid farmers during drought

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Parliamentarians on Wednesday urged the government to intensify efforts to help farmers already facing difficulties as a result of this year's drought due to the low amount of rainfall this winter.

Deputy Ghazi Al Fayed suggested that the government reactivate the Range Land Agreement, signed between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which allows Jordanian livestock to breed in Saudi territories.

The agreement, signed in 1979, stipulates that livestock breeders from both sides would be granted "special permission" to travel freely between the two countries' territories.

Fayed called upon the government to make fodder available to livestock breeders at reasonable prices and to extend soft loans to buy these items.

In December, the govern-

ment declared a state of drought and said it would resort to certain measures to minimise the impact of the drought on livestock breeders and farmers.

"The government should act immediately to avoid the death of livestock, a matter of concern to many sectors in the country," Fayed told his colleagues during the session.

The deputy also urged the government to offer farmers vaccines to treat animals suffering from "foot-and-mouth disease" which destroys cattle herds and causes huge financial losses.

"The farmers are confused because of drought, high fodder prices, and a lack of veterinary vaccines," Fayed said.

Deputy Khalid Tarawneh asked the government to approach donor countries for financial assistance to cope with the drought.

Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Kreishah told lawmakers that the government

has undertaken certain measures to face the drought and to extend help for farmers and livestock breeders.

Kreishah said that among the measures his ministry adopted was a subsidies allocation to farmers and livestock breeders and an allocation of JD12 million in soft loans to those affected by the drought.

The minister said another JD500,000 were allocated to purchase vaccination from Turkey and France to fight the disease. More than 1,000,000 vaccination doses are expected to reach the Kingdom in the coming two days.

Kreishah said the government had already decided to open the rangeland reserves to farmers to allow their livestock to breed in these places.

Meanwhile, Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi urged Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Fayez Tarawneh to allow farmers who cultivate along the River Jordan to spend longer hours in their

fields. Farmers near the river are forced to vacate their farms before the sunset and not allowed to enter their farms in early morning hours.

"With these conditions, farmers do not have time to take care of their lands," Abbadi told Parliament.

Deputy Mijhim Sqour said he received a petition from 40 farmers in Northern Shouneh who complained that their lands were "taken" from them and allocated to "influential people."

"These people are upset because their lands were confiscated and they have been denied their rights," the deputy said.

"We urge the government to launch an investigation of those responsible for this problem," Sqour said, claiming that some people had been imprisoned for protesting this matter.

Drivers urge cancellation of traffic law

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Around 500 drivers sent a petition to HRH Crown Prince Abdullah urging him to cancel the newly implemented traffic law which they say is unfair and has caused scores of them to lose their jobs.

"I was twice fined from my job due to the law because my licence was suspended for two months," said Ahmad Mahmoud Salameh, a bus driver and a father of nine.

The new system, implemented in April 1998, is designed to help authorities take action against repeat traffic offenders by recording points for every major violation by both Jordanian and foreign drivers holding a valid Jordanian licence. A driver that accumulates 12 points has his or her licence revoked for two months.

"At a time when the govern-

ment fights unemployment and poverty, we join our children, unable to support them, barley making ends meet with 14 hours daily work," said the drivers in their letters to the Crown Prince.

"Driving is the only profession we have and if we lose our licences this would mean we cannot feed our children," they added.

Drivers also complain that the implementation of the law is dependent on "moody" traffic officers.

The 500 drivers claim they have no knowledge in the one year old law, and that they do not have a union to protect them or voice their concerns through the appropriate channels.

"We spend most of our day working, cut off from the rest of the world, which leads us to a state of ignorance of the new law."

Police officials said the Traffic Department published the law on the television and radio and in newspapers months before implementing it to avoid any misunderstandings of the rules of the new law.

"The Traffic Department is ready at any time to publish the new law to raise people's awareness of it," said Adnan Shamaileh, director of the Traffic Department.

One bus driver, working on the much travelled Amman-Sweileh route, criticised the 500 drivers for demanding the cancellation of the law "just because they do not know about it."

"The law was put to save our lives from hasty drivers and should not be changed," said the driver Mustafa Abu Meshref.

Other regulations stipulate that upon a driver's first violation, a file will be opened. After

accumulating 11 points, he or she must attend a "drivers' rehabilitation" course at a state-sponsored driving school.

Violations are worth one to four points, and include driving without a licence or under the influence of alcohol or drugs; failure to stop at red lights; failure to report to the nearest police station in the event of an accident that leads to injury; using a forged licence plate; and violating one-way street rules.

The annual number of traffic accidents in Jordan is among the highest in the world, and increases by an annual average of 10 per cent each year. Recent statistics released by the Traffic Department indicate that around 500 people were killed or seriously injured in Jordan in 1997 as a result of a road accident.

Agricultural engineers press for more allowances

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Several thousand agricultural engineers on Tuesday organised a one-hour sit-in in front of the Union of Professional Associations headquarters, calling on the government to amend their allowances, as it did last year for medical professionals.

Some engineers carried banners urging the government to honour its commitment to raise their salaries by 120 per cent, instead of 90 per cent, over the basic salary; a commitment the association's officials say was reiterated many times last year.

In a gesture of good will,

some participants distributed flowers to policemen who flocked to the scene to prevent the engineers from marching towards the Prime Ministry at the Fourth Circle.

No physical confrontations were reported to have occurred between the riot police who, armed with batons, surrounded the crowd.

"Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh gave the green light for the raise, but the government never issued a decision to raise allowances," said Hassan Jaber, president of the association.

Jaber said the association was forced to protest after losing

trust in the government and its intention to remedy their situation.

Participants said they were angered by the government's determination not to grant the engineers the raise and criticised the Cabinet for a "policy of procrastination."

"Whenever we refer to the government, they give us sweet talk but nothing happens," said Amjad Abu Zieg, who participated in the protest. "They have to realise that we are serious and will continue our campaign until the government gives us what we want."

"Holding a march is not a violation of the law or the Con-

stitution, and organising peaceful protest is a form of democracy," said Abu Zieg.

The engineer's decision to protest came during a meeting of the general assembly who unanimously agreed to hold the sit-in.

Participants also agreed to organise another sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry.

The government last December granted doctors and pharmacists working for the public sector a 120 per cent raise over their basic salaries after repeated demands.

Phosphate company to build housing estate in Ma'an

AMMAN (Petra) — Information Minister Naser Judeh Tuesday said the government has assigned the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) to prepare an overall plan for a housing estate to be built in Ma'an to accommodate families of workers in the Shidiyah Phosphates Mines.

Judeh made the statement after a Cabinet session Tuesday, which was chaired by HRH Crown Prince Abdullah for the

first time since his designation as heir to the Throne.

The Cabinet discussed progress in constructing a housing estate for families of workers of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC).

Judeh said the estate will be built on 500 dunams in Ma'an close to the industrial estate. He added that the first phase of the project includes the construction

of 740 housing units at an estimated cost of JD25 million, while the second phase includes the construction of 340 units at an estimated cost of JD14 million. The plan includes schools and other facilities.

Judeh expects the overall plan to be ready within 30 days. The JPMC is currently coordinating with financiers to secure the funds necessary to carry out the first phase.

Politicians take agenda of political reform to Crown Prince Abdullah

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Politicians appear to be wasting no time to impress their desire to see greater political and democratic reforms on HRH Prince Abdullah, the Regent, who was appointed Crown Prince only 10 days ago.

Leaders of the influential Muslim Brotherhood, a key ally of the regime on many occasions in the past four decades, and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), were among hundreds of politicians who flocked to Raghadan Palace last Thursday to congratulate Prince Abdullah on his appointment and to pledge allegiance to the Hashemite Throne.

Like the IAF, most of the country's 20 political parties hope that Prince Abdullah might give a badly-needed

push to the country's murky political system and ease dormant tensions between the opposition and the government.

"This is a chance to turn a new page," said IAF Secretary General Abdul Latif Arabiyat. "We need to shape our policies with clear objectives, to show the people that we are doing something new in the economy, at the social level, and politically."

Echoing many others' views, Arabiyat was quick to call for early elections, but the Muslim Brotherhood, moved swiftly to rectify such a proposal.

"We oppose early elections before a new, modern and democratic elections law is endorsed," said Abdul Majed Thneibat, the Brotherhood's overall leader.

Like fire under the ashes, the

debate over the controversial elections law — one reason for the historic decision by the Islamic-led opposition to boycott the November 1997 polls — was reignited.

But while columnists debated the viability of holding general polls ahead of 2001, when the four-year term of the 13th Parliament ends, deputies dismissed talks of early elections as "unfounded rumours."

"There is no need for early elections," said Deputy Mahmoud Kharabsheh, head of the Legal Affairs and National Guidance committees in the Lower House.

"This council was elected by the people, and dissolving it would mean invalidating the last elections and punishing those who participated," he told the Jordan Times.

Nine opposition parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, a list of

more than 80 prominent personalities, as well as the 80,000-strong Union of the Professional Associations, boycotted the 1997 polls, which were also marred by widespread allegations of vote rigging and government interference.

"Those who boycotted the elections, and now find themselves out of the political scene, are spreading this rumour on early elections," Kharabsheh said.

However, all political forces, in and out of Parliament, from the right wing to the left, are united in their call for a new elections law as a starting point for a comprehensive review of the country's smoldering democratic march.

The rightist National Constitutional Party, headed by Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali, has recently

joined forces with the former communists of the Democratic Party of the Left to back a proposal that envisages the allocation of a percentage of parliamentary seats to political parties.

But the proposal has infuriated some opposition circles. "Minority seats have already proved to be a tool in the government's hands to infiltrate Parliament," charged Circassian Toujan Feisal, the highest-profile loser of the last elections.

"Allocating seats to political parties would enable politicians of the old-guard, allied with the regime, to make their comeback through the service door," she told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

However, Feisal said, "this Parliament is forged and too weak to serve full term, therefore we expect early elec-

tions." According to her, "early elections will be one of the means the government will use to absorb the great changes going on at home and in the area, especially in terms of relations with Israel, the West and Americans, as well as the strain in relations with Iraq and Syria."

Amid intensified calls for political reforms, some are asking the new Crown Prince to convene a second national conference along the same guidelines as the conference which produced the 1992 National Charter.

In a letter to Prince Abdullah on Tuesday, a group of professionals and politicians said "times are mature for the convening of a national conference to reactivate the Constitution and launch a national dialogue."

The petition, signed by 11 between lawyers, engineers, and physicians, and championed by former minister and veteran Ba'athist Jamal Shaer, said the proposed national conference should meet three requirements. It must be truly representative of all sectors of society; take place in an extraordinary situation such as that characterising the convening of the 1992 Madrid Peace Conference; and be convened by the King or his deputy.

Issues to be addressed by such conference should include the country's democratic march, inter-Arab relations, the press and elections laws, as well as unemployment, corruption, and poverty, "in order to establish Arab economic complementarity."

As for relations with Israel, the signatories proposed that they be conditioned on Israeli

policies towards Arabs and Palestinians, namely the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Analysts said the fact that political circles have stepped up their hopes for reforms and multiplied their proposals will have a positive impact of Jordan's liberalisation and will help strengthen the institutions.

"Prince Abdullah is a new player in the internal political scene, although he has long operated behind the scene on the international level," said one Western diplomat.

"On one hand, everybody wants to impress him and win him over to their ideas. On the other, he also wants to listen and understand everybody."

Timorese separatists protest

DILI, Indonesia (AP) — About 200 separatists rallied Wednesday in East Timor as the Indonesian government said pro-independence groups were behind recent unrest in the troubled territory.

Buoyed by a surprise offer from Indonesia to consider independence for the former Portuguese colony, the chanting protesters demanded the Indonesian military withdraw troops at once.

For the third consecutive day, they gathered at Santa Cruz cemetery in East Timor's seaside capital of Dili, where Indonesian troops fired on separatists in 1991. Dozens were killed.

Indonesian officials have said the Southeast Asian nation's highest legislative body may discuss independence for East Timor if its people reject an autonomy proposal from Jakarta.

There has also been progress in U.N.-sponsored talks between Indonesia and Portugal, which the United Nations still considers the administering power in East Timor.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and annexed

it a year later, unleashing separatist rebel fighting and human rights abuses.

Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said anti-Indonesian East Timorese who have demanded a referendum on independence were largely responsible for recent violence in the troubled half-island territory.

"It is the pro-referendum groups that have been very active and sometimes very aggressive in the last few weeks," Alatas told Associated Press Television News. "We are trying to keep the situation under control."

Hundreds of villagers were sheltering in Suai, 80 kilometres southwest of Dili, after violence and threats between pro- and anti-independence groups.

Another 200 refugees who said they had been harassed by pro-Indonesian gunmen were staying at the home of a pro-independence leader in Dili.

Alatas denied accusations by pro-independence activists that the military had systematically armed East Timorese civilians who want their homeland to stay part of Indonesia.



Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas shakes hands with former rebel leader Abilio Araujo (right) in Jakarta. Araujo said East Timor's best prospects were to remain part of Indonesia, but with more autonomy over its affairs. Indonesia last week abruptly reversed 23 years of staunch opposition to any suggestion of independence for the former Portuguese territory, saying it may consider letting the province go if Timorese rejected its offer of autonomy (Reuters photo)

He clarified that, in line with a nationwide law enforcement programme, civilian guards in East Timor had been handed weapons to reinforce the police.

"What is happening in East Timor is the training and selective arming of so-

called village guards, or auxiliary guards," he said. "Groups continue to make attacks. The police need some reinforcement to ensure law and order." A delegation of pro-Indonesian East Timorese was expected to meet with government officials in

Jakarta this week to argue against independence.

East Timor was riven by internal conflict when Indonesia invaded East Timor after a hasty withdrawal by Portuguese colonisers, and fears abound that old antagonisms will fuel more vio-

lence if Indonesia pulls out thousands of troops.

"It is not a time to use confrontation, physical confrontation, because then it will show that we are not a mature society," said Abilio Araujo, a former separatist leader who met Alatas Wednesday.

Chinese troops clear mines from Vietnam border

BEIJING (R) — Chinese troops have cleared more than 280,000 landmines and unexploded bombs from the Sino-Vietnamese border in a seven-month operation to boost trade between the two former enemies, state media said Wednesday.

The Guangzhou Daily said the operation had opened up 25 km of border roads and two border crossings and was conducted without serious injury.

"The success of the Yunnan operation has caught the attention of world minesweeping experts," the paper said.

China's southwestern province of Yunnan borders Vietnam.

It said the rate of clearance was among the world's fastest.

The operation, conducted by 510 elite troops using advanced minesweeping equipment, was the second large-scale clearing on the border since 1994.

At least 800,000 mines were laid in Yunnan in a bloody border conflict between China and Vietnam in 1979. Beijing had wanted to punish Hanoi for its invasion of Cambodia a few months earlier.

Minesweepers were aided by advanced technology, including anti-landmine boots developed by the Chinese military.

"One soldier stepped on 72 mines but because of the boots, only suffered minor injuries to his toes and the skin on his feet," the paper said.

"He was treated and back with his unit in no time." The success of the operation has caught the attention of the United Nations, which is considering using Chinese minesweeping expertise in its clearing efforts abroad, the paper said.

There are an estimated 100 million landmines buried or hidden in 64 countries around the world. Some 25,000 people a year are killed or maimed by mines left when wars end.

'ASEAN trying hard to save EU meet'

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan said Wednesday ASEAN would keep trying to save next month's ministerial meeting with the European Union which is threatened by a furious row over Myanmar.

The ASEAN-EU meeting in Berlin next month is in doubt as the EU has refused to relax a visa ban that would prevent Myanmar officials going to the talks.

Signs of a possible compromise have emerged in recent days however, with Myanmar saying it is willing to discuss any topic after Germany reportedly hinted Yungon's foreign minister might be admitted if the junta's heavily criticised human rights record was discussed.

Surin said no decision had been made over the fate of the talks after the Myanmar row forced the cancellation of a ASEAN-EU Joint Cooperation Committee meeting here last month.

"We do not lose momentum. It can keep going on. We will talk with the EU,"

he told reporters before visiting France, Austria and Belgium.

"The idea is that it is likely we will have a meeting, we don't say we must have a meeting, just that we should have."

"We can brainstorm, it is possible (to break the deadlock)."

Surin said both sides had solved problems threatening their relationship in the past, for example over the former Portuguese enclave of East Timor annexed by Indonesia.

"When other problems happen, we have to talk, to ease the tension, we have to keep trying," Surin said.

Disagreements over Myanmar have soured relations between the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in recent years.

Exiled Myanmar students on Wednesday urged Europe not to ease its hard line against the military government in Yangon.

The All Burma Students Democratic Front said the EU should not ignore what it said was the continuing deterioration of human

rights in Myanmar.

"The reported recent softening of the EU's policy on Burma contrasts with the increasing severity of the junta's approach to the pro-democracy opposition in Burma," the front said in a statement.

"The EU should be mindful of the fact that all forms of human rights violations, including forced labour, relocation, extortion, confiscation of farming land, burning and looting of villages and extra-judicial killings in ethnic nationality areas have continued unabated," the students said.

The EU and the United States staunchly opposed Myanmar's entry into ASEAN in 1997, saying the military government was guilty of major human rights violations and of suppressing the democracy movement of Aung San Suu Kyi.

ASEAN argued political change in Myanmar was more likely to arise from constructive debate than the punitive sanctions favoured by the EU and the United States.

Diplomats seek truce as Guinea-Bissau fighting intensifies

LISBON (AP) — Foreign diplomats in Guinea-Bissau are trying to broker a cease-fire between loyalist troops and rebels engaged in fierce fighting for control of the capital of the small West African nation, its interim prime minister said Wednesday.

Francisco Fadul said in a telephone interview from Bissau that fighting intensified overnight between a breakaway military faction and the mostly Senegalese troops supporting President Joao Bernardo Vieira.

"There's a lot of automatic weapon fire and a lot of heavy shelling," Fadul said.

He said the foreign and defence ministers of Togo were due to arrive in Bissau Wednesday morning to try to negotiate a truce between the two sides.

Separate efforts at halting the fighting were being made by the ambassadors

of Portugal, France and Sweden, according to Fadul.

He declined to give further details, but the diplomats previously have said they are seeking to hold the foe to a November peace accord that had halted last year's five-month civil war in the former Portuguese colony.

At least 35 people have died and 220 have been wounded since the fighting flared Sunday in the West African nation, aid workers said.

Most of the country's 6,000-strong army have joined the rebellion aimed at deposing Vieira. The insurgents charge Vieira is corrupt.

Aid workers say that among the wounded so far were members of ECOMOG, the defence arm of the 16-member Economic Community of West African States.

There are 110 ECOMOG soldiers, mostly from

Togo, in the country to oversee the peace accord and act as a buffer between the two sides. Hundreds more were due to arrive this week.

A ship carrying more than 200 refugees, including 95 children, which ran aground on a sand bank outside Bissau port was pulled free by another vessel Tuesday night, the Portuguese news agency Lusa reported.

The peace pact called for the withdrawal of foreign troops, a peacekeeping deployment, a government of national unity and general elections in March.

The rebellion, which first broke out last June, was triggered by the dismissal of rebel leader Brig. Ansumane Mane as top military commander for allegedly running guns to separatist fighters in Senegal. Mane denies the charge and alleges that Vieira was behind the scheme.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Soldiers policing Russian nuclear warheads owed months of back-pay

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's general in charge of maintaining the nation's stockpile of nuclear warheads conceded Wednesday that soldiers who police the top-secret sites are owed months of back pay. Their families' secret sites are owed months of social benefits for most of last year. "That is our main concern," General Igor Vasilyin told a press conference. "The person who works with nuclear weapons knows secrets and they know all the entrance ways." Vasilyin said Russian troops enlisted in the 12th division in charge of keeping and transporting nuclear weapons are owed wages for last August and September. Social benefits for their families who live primarily in isolated military sites in Russia's remote and Siberian regions have only been paid through 1997. The revelation underscores western fears that parts of Russia's massive nuclear stockpile may be sold off by embittered soldiers to rogue nations. Vasilyin's remarks came during a briefing in which he outlined the benefits of the U.S. Congress-funded Nunn-Lugar project that has paid tens of millions of dollars to keep Russia's nuclear stockpile safe.

Indian minorities watchdog blames government for violence

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's religious minorities watchdog criticised the government Wednesday for failing to heed warnings that could have prevented the spread of attacks on Christians in India. Tahir Mahmood, chairman of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), told the Press Trust of India the government's failure to act on NCM recommendations had contributed to the anti-Christian violence in the western state of Gujarat over Christmas. "Communal violence is a contagious disease and incidents (in) Gujarat should have been nipped in the bud," Mahmood said. "This would not have spread to other parts of the country if ... fore-warnings on Gujarat were taken note of sincerely." Mahmood said that following a survey in Gujarat in August, his commission had warned "that the incidents could be reneaded elsewhere and suggested remedial steps." Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee toured the state after Christmas and gave the local government a clean bill. Vajpayee's BJP rules Gujarat, where the Christians had been targeted by radical Hindus for alleged forced conversions. Hindus form about 83 per cent of India's 975 million population. Muslims comprise 15 per cent, while Christians account for little more than two per cent. The recent violence culminated last month in the brutal murder of an Australian missionary and his two young sons in the eastern state of Orissa.

Pakistani judge dealing with love-match row hears father

LAHORE, Pakistan (AFP) — A Pakistani judge deciding the fate of a couple who married in defiance of parents on Wednesday heard the bride's father claim that the wedding was illegal, legal sources said. Humaira, 28, and her husband Mehmood Butt attended the proceedings held by Lahore High Court judge Tasaddug Hussain in his chamber. They watched video film of a wedding presented by the bride's father Abbas Khokhar. Khokhar, a provincial assembly member and influential landlord, said the footage showed Humaira marrying a cousin before she eloped with Butt last year, the sources said. Humaira said the film was taken after she had secretly married Butt in Lahore and that her family forced her to cooperate in staging a fake marriage for the camera. The judge scheduled the next hearing for Monday. Police say they have received a complaint of kidnap against Butt, who was arrested along with Humaira at Karachi in southern Sindh province on Jan. 28 and brought to Lahore, the capital of central Punjab province. The couple told the judge Monday they were beaten while in custody following their arrest. Judge Hussain is hearing a petition filed by lawyer Hina Jilani on behalf of a Women's Action Forum, which is seeking protection for the couple against alleged harassment and a vendetta by the family. Monday the judge ordered police to free Butt but impounded his passport and told him to cooperate with police. Hussain sent Humaira to a home for distressed women run by human rights activists pending a verdict.

Mother of four sentenced to prison for stealing 20 cents

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — A Romanian woman was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison after being convicted of stealing the equivalent of 20 cents to pay her bus fare home, a judge said Wednesday. Such heavy sentences for petty offences have drawn outrage in recent years, since judges have begun imposing longer sentences allowed by parliament for theft in 1996. Before then, maximum sentences were months, but now measure years. The defendant in the recent case, Adela Dirivan, told the court she stole 2,500 lei (20 cents) from a man's pocket in Bucharest last year because she couldn't afford bus fare to her rural southern hamlet, near Pitesti. The judge, who declined to give her name, characterised the 2 1/2-year sentence as lenient, saying she had taken into account the fact the woman has four children, the youngest of whom is 7 months old, and no criminal record. The law allows for a maximum sentence of 15 years. "Stealing is stealing and I gave her less than the recommended minimum sentence," the judge said. On the same day as Dirivan's sentencing last week, the same Bucharest court gave a 4-year sentence to a man convicted of stealing \$25,000 worth of cars, the daily Libertatea reported. Dirivan is free, pending an appeal.

British skier injured in avalanche released from hospital

PARIS (AP) — A British skier injured in an avalanche has been released from the hospital and British authorities Wednesday identified another skier killed in the same accident in the French Alps. Mark Wilson, 29, from Keighley in England, was killed Tuesday at the Val d'Isere ski resort when he was hit by the avalanche and buried under feet of snow, the British consulate in Lyon confirmed Wednesday. Police had initially reported Tuesday that the victim was a woman. Another British man, who was not identified, suffered from shock, but was released from a hospital Tuesday evening, police said. Police initially reported the second victim had been seriously injured. A third skier in the group suffered no injuries. There has been a heightened risk of avalanches in the French Alps for weeks. Sunday, a mountain climber and a snow boarder, both from Britain, died after accidents in the area. Another snow boarder was killed last Thursday in the Mont Blanc region.

China under fire for being soft on sea pirates

SINGAPORE (AP) — A high-ranking official of an international maritime organisation Wednesday accused China of abetting piracy and making Asian waters a nightmare for ship owners and crews.

"China is the one country that lets the pirates go," Jayant Abhyankar, deputy director of the London-based International Maritime Bureau, told The Associated Press.

"We see that in almost every case we see in China," he said, adding that this presents a "very serious problem in fighting international piracy." Abhyankar will address the issue during a three-day workshop in Singapore this week on fighting piracy.

Sponsored by the International Maritime Organisation, the event will be attended by representatives from several Asian countries as well as by observers from other countries and delegates from international shipping organisations.

While the number of pirate attacks worldwide decreased in 1998, the South China Sea remains the riskiest area, said E.O. Agbakoba, head of the International Maritime Organisation's

Maritime Safety Division.

All of the world's coastal countries — 156 of them — are members of the organisation, which sets strict guidelines to prevent piracy. But their efforts are increasingly undermined by China's lack of cooperation, Abhyankar said.

In his report, Abhyankar listed several incidents in recent years when pirates were released by authorities in China.

In 1997, the Chinese Public Security Bureau "simply sent home" 14 hijackers of the Cypriot vessel Anna Sierra, the report said. The Chinese claimed to have no jurisdiction over the matter, as the ship was hijacked off Thailand.

But the Chinese authorities also sold the ship's cargo and charged its owner \$400,000 to cover the cost of their inquiries, the report said.

"This condition was extraordinary in that no law enforcement agency makes a charge for its services," Abhyankar said, adding that the security bureau never disclosed the nature of their "inquiries." The losses suffered by the ship owner of Anna

Sierra eventually ran into millions of dollars, he said.

The case of the Malaysian tanker Petro Ranger, hijacked in 1998 and found in Hainan Island in China, "was representative of the hijackings" last year, Abhyankar said.

Although the pirates, the ship and its cargo were not prosecuted and were repatriated to Indonesia, their home country.

"Piracy cannot be resolved in this way," Abhyankar said.

"The incident will encourage the pirates to carry on," China responded Wednesday by calling the IMB's allegations "groundless."

"The Chinese government has attached extreme importance to the problems of piracy and have done a lot of work on this issue in recent years," the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

"We would like to cooperate with relevant countries and international organisations to continue attacking severely maritime crimes that threaten the safety of people and property."

Probe into uncovers

A probe into the death of a young woman in a hospital in London has uncovered a series of mistakes by medical staff, a coroner has said. The woman, who was 21, died after a long illness. The coroner said that the medical staff had not followed the correct procedures in treating her. The probe was conducted by a local health authority. The coroner said that the medical staff had been under a lot of pressure and that this may have contributed to the mistakes. The coroner said that the medical staff had been told to follow the correct procedures, but they had not done so. The coroner said that the medical staff had been told to follow the correct procedures, but they had not done so. The coroner said that the medical staff had been told to follow the correct procedures, but they had not done so.

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Relatives of a man who was killed in a car accident have been told that they should not expect to see him again. The man was killed in a car accident on a busy road. The relatives have been told that they should not expect to see him again because he was killed. The relatives have been told that they should not expect to see him again because he was killed. The relatives have been told that they should not expect to see him again because he was killed.

Jordan Times

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Sound tactic to end conflict

NATO SEEMS to be trying a new tactic with the warring parties in Kosovo. It is warning them either to go to France and talk or else face the wrath of the alliance's air power. This latest effort by the Western powers to end the bloodshed in Kosovo between its ethnic Albanian majority and the Serb forces is certainly a novelty in international affairs and conflict resolution. Should it work, the same tactic could be deployed elsewhere in the world.

The Serb side of course has more to lose through this negotiating dynamic than the weaker ethnic Albanians. NATO is right in resorting to this arm-twisting diplomacy. Left alone, Belgrade will never negotiate a sensible deal with the people of Kosovo. Only an effective intervention by the major powers would bring peace to the province.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was the first to accept the NATO offer. Belgrade, on the other hand, is typically and predictably dragging its feet because it knows that once it sits on the negotiating table, NATO will be close overhead, watching and gauging every negotiating move it takes. The parameters of the ultimate solution in Kosovo are already clear enough: "high degree of self-government to Kosovo," that could lead to an eventual independence and sovereignty for the ethnic Albanians. Such a solution appears to be the only sensible one. No foreign power should be allowed to subjugate another people against its will. Belgrade's presence and exercise of sovereignty over Kosovo and its people is a new form of occupation that the international community is not willing to accept.

Any political settlement to the Kosovo conflict should not, however, end the call for accountability for all the crimes against humanity that were committed there. Last month's massacre of 45 Albanians by Serb forces should not be forgotten simply because a settlement looms on the horizon. Accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity is a separate issue that needs to be pursued with vigour and determination. Belgrade should accept the investigation of the massacre and similar crimes as long as it denies responsibility. The same goes for the other side. Anything short of that would make a mockery of the international consensus that the investigation and punishment of war crimes and crimes against humanity are an integral part of the new world order.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fakhri Kavar said that when the Ministry of Health decided to approve Viagra in the local market it was a response to public demand. The decision was taken after comprehensive studies and tests, making its use conditional upon prescription, added Kavar. Polls conducted on the issue showed that there is a notable demand for the medicine, and though the ministry hasn't received any complaints this does not mean that the drug is totally safe, said the writer. The ministry's decision was correct, but the implementation was wrong, stated Kavar: It is not enough to warn people about the medicine, there ought to be regulations and laws regulating its use and availability.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said he wants to reevaluate the official statement made after the Arab Foreign Ministers' meeting regarding Iraq. In the statement, the ministers stressed their opposition to any military or non-U.N. solution, their recognition of Iraq's unity and their refusal to interfere in the country's internal affairs, said Saket. Those who have followed the recent incidents in the region, find these developments and some Arab stands in total contradiction with the statement. The allied strikes continue, the U.S. air embargo is still imposed, and attempts to destroy the Iraqi regime are under way, said Saket. Where is the Arab stand, he asked?

Education that is still textbook-based

BOTH OUR SCHOOL and university classroom is, on the whole, textbook based. That is, for every school subject or university course, we have either one or more textbooks, or we try to. The assumption is, and it is largely correct, that a textbook is needed for each class.

Each time you meet your students, it is not only preferable but also necessary to have a text in front of each to look at, read from, quote from, comment on, analyse, etc. If there is no text in front of a group, the discussion will most likely be either too abstract or unfocused.

There was a time when textbooks were either unavailable or hard to obtain. That was a problem. Students and teachers' primary task (in many cases it was the sole task) was to obtain information. In this context, the teacher was provider of knowledge. He/she collected information and passed it on to students. Not only was classroom interaction minimal (teachers transmitted, students received) but the teacher filled in the gap created by the absence of the textbook

— he/she became a textbook. In other words. In the best of cases, he explained some of the information he gathered and transmitted. This practice or role, teachers as textbooks, is still prevalent in some disciplines where textbooks have not been designed or found yet.

When textbooks came into existence, they endowed the teaching/learning process with a great deal of integrity. The educational process was influenced positively. Not only were teachers and students relieved from the unpleasant, boring and somewhat unfruitful process of recital and recording, but they also started to afford going beyond the literal text and surface meaning into deeper interpretations and analyses.

The textbook, is an important catalyst for excellent classroom interaction. By making at least the minimal needed information available, it enables students and teachers to examine, look into, think, and analyse.

Textbooks, then, are a blessing. But while textbooks are important for the reasons just stated, they have at least one harmful side-

effect. Not only do textbooks give the impression that what they contain in them is the truth (the whole truth, that is) but they also often prevent teachers and students from pursuit of knowledge beyond textbooks. Textbooks ease access to information, they are convenient to use; but students and teachers may get too reliant on them at times. This deprives students from the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives and complex arguments.

Textbook writers or compilers either simplify or fragment. They do not want to "confuse," "disturb," "bewilder," or "corrupt" students. This is why they tend to either summarise or select what is "appropriate" or "easy to handle." Since one of the noblest aims of education is to broaden students' horizons, textbooks, by placing knowledge in a nutshell as it were, tend to somewhat undermine such broadness. They limit students' freedom of thought, and they impose simplified and incomplete formulae on them. As a result, students may develop simple-mindedness and overconfidence.

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

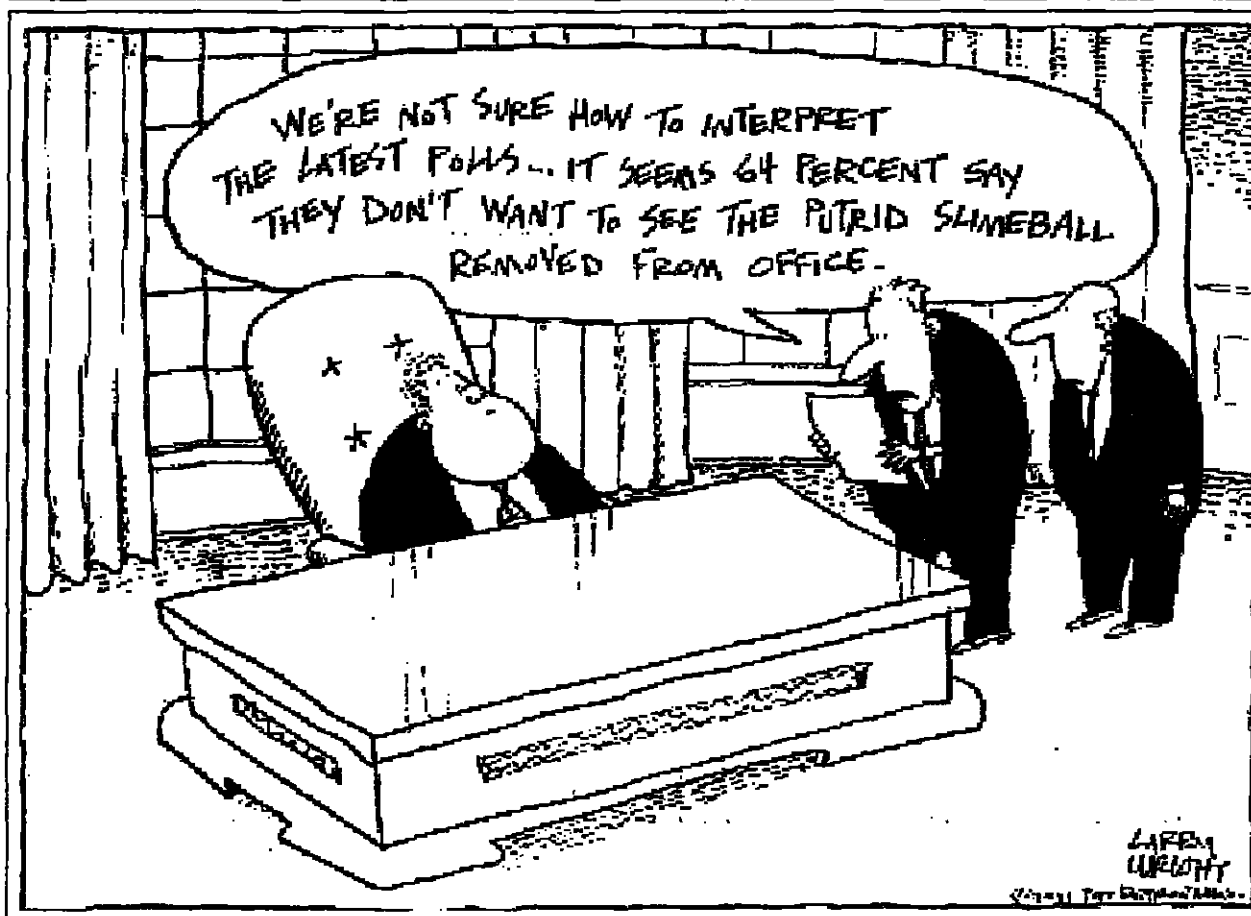
The problem with textbooks, in other words, is that they often either discourage or prevent students from seeking information and knowledge in other books.

One may hasten to ask rhetorically: what prevents students from reading both textbooks and books? I hasten to agree with the spirit of the question: students should not be prevented from reading books on top of textbooks. A student may read a textbook, but he/she should also seek information in other

books.

In principle, this is not only reasonable but correct. In practice, there are at least three problems with it. For one thing, our reliance on textbooks (as both individuals and institutions) affects negatively our acquisition of books. Our libraries (at the school and university levels) are generally poor in holdings. Secondly, textbooks tend to make students lazy. Why read from several books, and search through endless catalogues and book stacks, when a textbook gives the summary of an issue in a nutshell? Furthermore, our education is still exam oriented. How can students who read books outside textbooks be evaluated in exams. Most teachers, whether you like it or not, judge you on the basis of the answers you bring from the textbooks, not on the basis of those which you bring from other books.

Textbooks are important in a class, but students' encounter with knowledge should go beyond what these textbooks have. Our curriculum should be textbook-based, but they should not be based only on textbooks.



A yen for the glittering euro

THE WORLD monetary scene is changing, particularly with the advent of the euro, though there is more to it than that. However, let's take a look at the euro first. Within the next three years, everybody from central bankers and the treasurers of multinational corporations to small businesses and ordinary households will have the euro as a real and simple option to exercise when considering how to hold reserves and savings. And exercise it they will, with many observers predicting a big role for the euro as a reserve currency within less than a decade. The Arab and other states in the Mediterranean region will be particularly avid fans of the new currency, especially as Euro-Med trade agreements become more important over the next few years.

So where does all this leave the dollar? For the past fifty years, the U.S. currency has been the closest thing available to world money, but not so much now as a decade or two ago. True, most people in most places and in the Middle East in particular — whether Saudi housewives, Kuwaiti bankers, or businesspeople in Beirut — regard the dollar as their second-favourite currency, after their national one. In fact, in some places such as Lebanon and Israel in the 1980s, the dollar was the number one currency, with business and monetary life being "dollarised." In Beirut, just a decade or so ago, buying a sandwich or a newspaper let alone acquiring a new house, piece of land, car etc., was often undertaken in dollars. In fact the dollar still circulates in Lebanon alongside the rejuvenated Lebanese pound. However, I among many others have little doubt, in the case of Lebanon in particular but also for most of the rest of the region, that the euro will be a strong competitor to the dollar, everywhere from households and malls to the coffers of commercial and central banks.

As the euro waxes, other things that serve as a monetary reserve may be losing their glitter. This is becoming obvious in the case of gold. Not too long ago, people in many parts of the world, especially the Middle East, put great faith in gold. As late as the 1970s, the price of gold would often rise sharply on bad news, as both rich and poor stocked up the metal "just in case." This is no longer true; and while it would be a mistake to dismiss gold completely as a reserve for ladies buying jewellery or for wary

central bankers, there is little doubt that its role as a hedge in times of trouble will continue to diminish. Even in the Middle East, traditionally a big gold consumer, major buying over the next few years is unlikely. We might expect people and governments in the region to buy gold if the oil price soars, but this doesn't look like it's going to happen for some time. A look at the figures (see box) seems to confirm the waning Middle East appetite for gold.

In both Jordan and Egypt, along with most other countries in the region, central bank gold holdings have stagnated, and have in any case been falling relative to foreign exchange reserves. (Note that these and other official valuations of gold tend to understate its price relative to the market; nevertheless, the trend has been down.)

The figures for other developing and developed states are similar, as some central banks even seek to divest themselves of gold. The final nail in gold's coffin might have come with a recent vote in the Swiss Parliament's lower house approving legislation that may in due course permit the Swiss Central Bank to sell some of its bullion. The Swiss authorities are not exactly profligate when it comes to monetary matters, and their gradual abandonment of gold means that other countries may not be far behind in taking similar steps. As this happens, the euro could partly replace these gold holdings.

The other factor that may also help the euro establish itself is the possibly imminent collapse of the yen. Japan, whether it wants to or not, must soon admit that the only way to stem its deflation is to print a huge amount of

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

money. Of course, this will cause a drop in the yen. Now trading at around 115 to the dollar, the yen will probably stay strong until the end of March, the close of the Japanese fiscal year, before sliding. When that happens, Asian and other holders of yen could turn to the euro.

Obviously, the eclipse of gold and the yen could also benefit the dollar — which itself doesn't look like it's going to be in trouble in the near future. Other options, though minor, could also be currencies like sterling and the Swiss franc. However, for countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and their neighbours, whose trade with the eleven countries of Euroland is growing, the euro will be a favourite with central bankers and others during the coming few years. At the same time, Euroland itself will probably be expanding to take in the four remaining EU national currencies that remain outsiders. When that happens, the euro will look even more attractive than it is now, and the day when a euro note will buy you a meal in Beirut will not be that far away.

Egypt's gold and foreign exchange reserves, annual averages for fiscal years 1993/4-1997/8, in \$ billions

	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6	1996/7	1997/8
Gold	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6
Foreign exchange	13.6	15.8	16.6	18.6	18.9

Jordan's gold and foreign exchange reserves, end of period 1994-8, in \$ billions

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998(Oct.)
Gold	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Foreign exchange	1.6	1.7	1.8	2.2	1.8

Jerusalem revisited

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

JERUSALEM SOMEHOW never fails to amaze me. At times one gets the feeling that this is a hopeless city and then something happens to renew one's faith in the city and its people. I am talking primarily about the old city of Jerusalem. Despite the political and social problems there is a certain magic about the walled city and its people that no invaders or occupiers has ever succeeded in overcoming.

I say all these things after spending the past few weeks preparing for and recording a television town hall meeting about the old city. This is the third programme in a series about Jerusalem organised by Al Quds University's Educational Television and the Jerusalem Information Centre.

Social workers, youth leaders, women's activists, and politicians were invited. Community leaders and common citizens of Jerusalem attended and provided the spice that renewed my faith in the city and its people.

The program began with a television report in which we saw first hand what the problem was like. Mohammed Hishmeh who recently returned from Kuwait was seen with his family of six living in a tiny one bedroom apartment. Another couple, the Sidars, who were forcibly evicted from their house by Jewish settlers were living with their children in a store rather than risk losing their IDs. The Palestinian residents of the old city explained that their problems have increased even more since the Israeli government started its attempts at ethnic cleansing by confiscating the residency permits for Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, if they were caught living outside the city limits.

There is no food shortages we were assured, but what kind of life is it when people are living practically on top of each other. Omar Al Staf from the Old City Youth Centre explained the lack of space for Palestinian youth who are the majority of the residents of the old city. Spending all their free times in the streets is a perfect invitation for social problems. Salw Hdeeb, a women activist explained that the problem in the city is especially acute for females over 12 who are imprisoned in their overcrowded homes from the moment they return from school. It doesn't take long for them to jump on the first opportunity of marriage with the hopes that they will be released from this life of confinement.

But while the panelists were expressing their concerns over the social issues, many in the audience were quick to quiz the Palestinian politicians.

What has the Palestinian Authority done for us, they asked Faisal Hussein? What is the Legislative Council doing for us, they questioned Ahmad Batsh, the council member representing the Jerusalem district? Where is the money going another asked? Instead of spending it on concerts and music festivals why not spend it on repairing our homes before they fall down. Some in the audience pointed fingers at the politicians reminding them that they came to them for help, and they were unable to do anything. More

than one person stood up and said: "I need a simple house." The questions kept coming: Why has the old city of Hebron got more money than the old city of Jerusalem? Oslo is not an excuse, the PLO was able to work when it was considered illegal by Israel, and it was located in far away Tunis.

For their part Hussein and company tried to defend their position. He started by reminding the television host that he represents the PLO and not the PNA. The Oslo Agreement prohibits the PNA from working in Jerusalem while the PLO is a legitimate address in the holy city. The problems of Jerusalem are much greater than can be resolved. He outlined the difficulties in spending money earmarked for Jerusalem where some of the Gulf donors insist on proper housing permits before a housing loan is given, and the Israelis are not forthcoming. We have money that we can't spend, he said. Hussein reminded the audience of the difficulty in working in Jerusalem when the Israelis kick out any organisation that has any connection to the PNA, and said that in Hebron the improvements have only happened in the areas under Palestinian control. The old city of Jerusalem is an area "C". Hussein also reminded the audience of the many improvements that have happened: fixing homes that were falling apart; giving some aid to the needy and homeless; and supporting Palestinian institutions — mainly youth clubs. "Those who get help never come to these meetings, only those who don't."

Talk about stones rather than people did not please Nora Qurt, whose charity runs a medical clinic, nor community organiser Terry Boulant. What is needed is community leadership, and development of human resources to embark self-dependency, they argued. Mohammad Shadid from the Welfare Association agreed, and said his organisation has placed legal help and vocational training high on their grant policy.

More than two hours of discussion proved how much work is needed in Jerusalem. But although the Palestinian leaders were often on the defensive, it was clear that this was a family affair. With the exception of a couple of genuinely interested Israelis the scene was pure Palestinian and it had magic of the sort you see when people realise their own power. The Israeli municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli government, which considers Jerusalem its undivided capital, were absent physically and mentally.

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The truth, what's that?

In October the Truth and Reconciliation Committee accused FW de Klerk of covering up state-orchestrated bombings of churches and the South African TUC. Now he's promoting his autobiography, in an effort to tell his side of the story.

By Gary Younge

THE RECENT HISTORY of South Africa according to FW de Klerk goes something like this: A white minority government, ruled by a series of benevolent dictators, was keen to devolve power to the black majority as equal partners. Some white extremists meted out a degree of racial injustice and neither the blacks nor the rest of the international community were interested in the deal. So the white rulers decided the most reasonable and fair thing to do was give up their power and hand it over to people they had previously seen fit to put in prison. They were led by Nelson Mandela, or other — a nice chap, although he could get uppity on occasions and proved something of a disappointment to those keen on establishing a democratic, non-racial country.

"When we handed over power in 1994 there was not one discrimination law on the statute book," says De Klerk, a heavy smoker with a warm manner and deeply furrowed brow. "In that sense the National Party abolished apartheid, not the new government." The man who insisted that South Africa could not "tamper with the policy of separate development but must abandon it completely," is now tinkering with history.

He is no longer the politician who was forced to end illegitimate white rule because of mass protest and international condemnation but, according to the Sunday Telegraph,

"the man who legislated himself out of power"; no longer history's receptacle but its master.

"We started the process in 1986 under PW Botha," he says, referring to the former president who declared the state of emergency in 1985 and who was deemed, in a report to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, to be accountable for 'gross violations of human rights' when he ran the country from 1978 to 1989.

"It was then we said: One united South Africa, one citizenship, one vote. There was a strong moral element in this," De Klerk says.

By the time he took over in 1989 things had changed. The Berlin Wall was coming down, Israelis and Palestinians were at the negotiating table and the world was waiting for events in South Africa to unravel and hoping not too much blood would be shed in the process. Whether De Klerk, now 60, did the right thing at the right time, or was simply in the right place at the right time, is a moot point.

"History did present me with an opportunity to move faster and take my constituency with me but we had to seize the opportunity." This is De Klerk's story and not only is he sticking to it, he is roaming the world actively promoting it in his autobiography, *The Last Trek, A New Beginning*.

Biographers were probably never going to be kind to De Klerk. True, he played a significant role in steering his country from pariah autocracy to a democracy embraced by the

international community. But there was also the sticky matter of the 17 years as a National Party MP, during which he rose through the party ranks while it committed some of the most unspeakable atrocities in recent times.

De Klerk does not so much have a skeleton in his closet as a whole coterie doing the can-can all around his bedroom. In October, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee accused him of covering up a state-orchestrated bombing of the South African Council of Churches in 1988 and the Congress of South African Trade Unions in 1987.

"The fact is, I didn't know," he says. "I didn't know because it was hidden from me, as it was hidden from other political decision-makers. And some of the heads of police and the defence forces, it was also hidden from them." If he truly wanted to secure a favourable place in history one wonders why he did not simply bow out gracefully after he shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

"I felt a duty to stay on and finish what I had set out to do. I wanted to see the process through to its logical conclusion, not secure my place in history." The tone of the book suggests that he realised that if he was going to be sure of a good write-up he would have to do it himself. When he abandoned politics in August 1997, the former National Party leader said he was retiring to pen a work which would place events in South Africa "in their correct per-

'The man who insisted that South Africa could not tamper with the policy of separate development but must abandon it completely,' is now tinkering with history'

spective".

"I wanted people to look at our history in its proper time frame," he says. "The same mistakes that we made were still being made in the United States and the ex-colonies. Then we carried them on for around 20 years longer. It was a time when we thought it would go away. But the average moderate white South

African family never hated black people. They made many mistakes, but they weren't arch racists as has been dictated by propaganda." De Klerk's "perspective" is selective. The Sharpeville massacre and the shootings in Soweto — two landmark incidents of the apartheid years — get a paragraph each in his book. Asked whether he felt compelled to speak out against the Soweto uprisings, which took place while he was an MP, he says: "I was very shocked by it and I was critical of Treurnicht's [then the former National Party leader] attitude to his brief.

But I was not in the country at the time. I was in Germany on my way to the U.S." Given that De Klerk has had more than 20 years to come up with an explanation one must assume this is the best he can do.

His attempt to rehabilitate his political legacy is made none the easier by the fact that his name is constantly matched against the most popular politician in the world. "I am not jealous of Nelson Mandela. I recognise him as a big man. But religiously speaking I don't think that any human being can be sanctified to the extent that they cannot make mistakes." It is clear that he believes in a multi-racial democracy, now that it is a reality. But it is difficult to see how he got there — it is as though he simply fell asleep and woke up at Damascus without having any of the blinding revelations on the way.

He comes from a long line of Afrikaaner heavyweights — his

great-grandfather was a senator, his grandfather a Boer war combatant and his father a cabinet minister.

"When I was a young man, I supported the idea of building a federation that would be a look little bit like Europe," he says. "The Zulus would have Zululand, like the French have France, the Xhosa would have their own country like the Germans and the Afrikaans would have theirs, and all these different nation-states would be held together by something like the European Union.

"But there was a lack of international support for this and the majority of blacks resisted it. They didn't want a slice of the cake, they wanted the whole cake and to have a say in how it was divided." And then there was that other nasty business — the racism. "Things were done which were morally indefensible. The humiliations, the divisions of people, the forced removals. That was wrong." Within a few years he says he realised that the races in South Africa had lived side by side for too long for any separation to be effective or anything other than forced.

"It was like an omelette," he says, contributing yet another culinary metaphor to racial discourse alongside the melting pot and salad bowl. "An omelette which we couldn't undo."

The Last Trek, A New Beginning by FW de Klerk is published by Macmillan, £20.

— The Independent

Cyprus in new push for international peace force

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The government of Cyprus is to launch a new diplomatic drive for the deployment of an international force on the divided Mediterranean island, Foreign Minister Yannis Cassoulides said here Wednesday.

Cassoulides said the deployment of such a force, possibly organised by NATO, would allow the island to be demilitarised and could take place "even before we have found a political settlement."

The initiative follows a reduction in tensions in the region after the Dec. 30 decision by the Greek-Cypriot government not to proceed with the

threatened deployment of Russian ground-to-air missiles.

Cassoulides said the proposed peacekeeping force would require a U.N. Security Council mandate and could only go ahead with the agreement of Turkey, which has occupied northern Cyprus since 1974.

Once the international force was deployed, both Turkey, which has an estimated 35,000 troops stationed in the north of Cyprus, and Greece, which has a much smaller contingent in the south, would be expected to withdraw their forces.

The Greek Cypriot national guard would also be progressively disman-

tled. Cassoulides added that the Cypriot government, which has begun negotiations with a view to joining the European Union (EU), was prepared to meet the operating costs of the international force.

He said he would be pressing the initiative in upcoming talks with U.S. officials in Washington.

Cassoulides said Cyprus would be ready for EU membership in 2003 but acknowledged that he expected accession not to take place before 2005. A number of EU governments have repeatedly made it clear that there is no question of Cyprus being brought into the bloc while it remains

divided.

A U.N. force of some 1,200 troops is currently based in Cyprus, charged with policing the green line that divides north and south.

Cassoulides said the international force he envisaged would be much bigger and would be deployed across the island.

He said he favoured a NATO force as both Greece and Turkey are members of the alliance, which could make deployment easier.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkey occupied its northern third in 1974 following a Greek-Cypriot coup aimed at uniting the island with Greece.

Libya has received 'most' guarantees for Lockerbie trial — Musa

CAIRO (AFP) — Libya has received "most" of the guarantees it demanded to allow the start of a trial of two Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie bombing, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said in an interview published Wednesday.

"Libya has got most of the guarantees and I hope that the two suspects will soon be extradited" by Tripoli to the Netherlands where the trial is set to take place, Musa told the London-based Arab newspaper Al Hayat.

"The Lockerbie case is on its way to being solved and the Libyan, U.N., U.S. and British authorities are about to reach a comprehensive agreement," Musa said.

In August, the United States and Britain agreed to holding a trial in the Netherlands of the

two Libyans suspected of masterminding the December 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, that left 270 dead.

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi accepted the compromise, but has called for the suspects, if found guilty, to be imprisoned in the Netherlands, not elsewhere. This has been rejected by London and Washington.

Musa's remarks to Al Hayat came as a British newspaper reported on Wednesday that secret talks involving a senior Saudi official were underway to secure the handover of the Libyan suspects.

The Guardian said that the Saudi ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar Ben Sultan, had travelled to Tripoli last month to try and secure a deal over the affair.

Last minute update

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE ONE PC term you can't ignore or avoid is "update." You're used to updating your word processing software, your virus scanner, your web browser and of course your PC hardware every now and then. This week Chiptalk brings you an update on computer terminology. I won't insult your computer culture by explaining what MB and MHz represent. I will rather introduce some of the new or less known buzzwords in the trade, as well as some "new definitions for old terms" you thought you knew well...



in cache memory. Not yet on the market, in Jordan at least.

On the lighter side (received over the Internet from an anonymous source)

BIT — A word used to describe computers, as in "our son's computer cost quite a bit."

DISK — What goes out in your back after bending over a computer keyboard for seven hours a day.

ERROR — What you made the first time you walked into a computer showroom to "just look."

EXPANSION UNIT — The new room you have to build on to your home to house your computer and all its peripherals.

FILE — What your secretary can do to her nails six hours a day, now that the computer does her day's work in 30 minutes.

FLOPPY — The condition of a constant computer user's stomach due to lack of exercise and a steady diet of junk food.

IBM — The kind of missile your family members and friends would like to drop on your computer so you'll pay attention to them again. (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile)

MENU — What you'll never see again after buying a computer because you'll be too poor to eat in a restaurant.

PROGRAMMES — Those things you used to look at on television before you hooked your computer up to it.

WINDOW — What you have the computer out of after you accidentally erase a programme that took you three days to set up.

VOODOO — No it's not what you think. This is the latest craze in terms of screen accelerators for sophisticated games. Plug one inside your PC and play "Flight Simulator" or "The Need for Speed" like you've never done it before.

XEON — The recently announced Pentium processor. Newer than the current Pentium II, the Xeon has more processing power and more built-

For comments or questions Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclauden@nets.com.jo

Arafat, Albright hold talks on 'revolving door' for prisoners

(Continued from page 1)

Rep. Sam Gejdenson, a co-host of a luncheon for Arafat, said continuation of the now-stalled peace process is the only hope for the region.

"There are lots of issues that have to be dealt with in the Middle East," he said in an interview. "The American role is to push this process forward."

Gejdenson, the senior Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, said he was "frankly fearful if we do not

do this in the near term it doesn't necessarily become easier in the future."

The other host is Rep. Arno Houghton, whose family donated the Wye conference centre where negotiations over the West Bank were held last October.

Albright is hoping the visit can give a push to the stalled land-for-peace accord the Clinton administration engineered between Israel and the Palestinians at Wye.

It calls for Israel to pull back on the West Bank in exchange for measures by the Palestinians to curb terrorism.

The latest flap concerns Israeli claims that five Islamists suspected in attacks in which Americans were victims had been set free.

Rubin said: "We have checked into this thoroughly, and we have not seen any evidence that would confirm the charges that the individuals released were involved in the killing of Americans."

The Palestinians had called the charges "nonsense."

Weizman cuts terms for Israelis who killed Arabs

(Continued from page 1)

The Israeli human rights group B'tselem quickly challenged Hanegbi, noting that while Israel had released Palestinians involved in anti-Israel violence, it had never pardoned an Arab convicted of murdering a Jew.

The group said that since 1987, Israeli civilians had killed 112 Palestinians in the occupied territories and only two of them were sentenced to life in prison for the crimes.

Both of these, Skolnik and Nahshon Wohls, a U.S. immigrant who shot and killed a pregnant Palestinian woman in 1990, subsequently had their sentences reduced by Weizman to 15 and 13 years respectively.

Since 1987, 90 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians in the occupied areas, while several hundred more died in bombings and other attacks inside Israel.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon accused Palestinians of releasing prisoners who murdered Jews and rejected comparisons to Israel's deci-

sion to reduce sentences. "All the steps were taken according to law. This is an entirely different situation," he told reporters.

The Israeli decision to cut the sentences of the five Israelis coincided with a public relations campaign by the Netanyahu government against the recent release by the PNA of several dozen Islamists, including up to 30 who Israeli says were involved in deadly attacks.

The Palestinians deny that any of those released played a role in the attacks.

day-to-day affairs of the state. Officials and analysts have been vocal in dispelling foreign and Arab media reports casting doubt on Jordan's stability after the change in succession.

Still, the challenges that lie ahead for Jordan may be as dangerous as those the Kingdom has faced in the last 47 years.

While many analysts say it is too early to assess Prince Abdullah's performance and how he will handle the challenges ahead, others say the new Crown Prince, who enjoys the backing of the Hashemite family and the army, has the makings of a leader.

However, most officials do not expect major reforms promised by the King before his sudden return to the United States to materialise until after the country is assured of the Monarch's health. Meanwhile, Prince Abdullah and the government are trying hard to cope with running the

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'Smooth' change of succession underlines strength of country's institutions, analysts say

(Continued from page 1)

In yet another sign of improving relations with Gulf Arab states, the new heir met with Kuwait's Interior Minister Prince Mohammad Khaled Al Sabah. Their meeting resulted in an agreement to reopen Jordan's embassy in Kuwait, closed since 1991 because of Amman's perceived support for Baghdad following Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib is due in Kuwait Saturday for an official visit.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are planning to provide Jordan with oil at a reduced price, according to a report

carried by the French news agency AFP. Jordan presently imports all of its oil needs overland by truck from Iraq (see separate story page 3).

The move by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait could be another signal that relations with the Gulf states, which deteriorated during the Gulf crisis, could finally be on the mend.

"The transition of power has been very smooth and showed that the state and the institutional structure Jordan has built over the years were able to absorb the change," said another official, requesting anonymity.

Officials and ordinary Jordanians hope for a longer transition for Prince Abdul-

lah, said by a relative to "have developed excellent knowledge of many economic and political problems facing Jordan from being close to his father and from his work with the army and the country's intricate security portfolio."

The influential Muslim Brotherhood has welcomed his appointment. The spiritual leader of the largest political movement in the Kingdom was one of the first to be shown congratulating the Crown Prince during the two-day ceremony at Raghadan Palace, where Prince Abdullah shook hands with more than 10,000 well-wishers from around the country.

"The affection displayed by Jordanians to Abdullah underscored the popular confidence in the King's choice," Musa Shaiwi, a sociology professor at the University of Jordan, was quoted by the Associated Press as saying.

"Jordanians are also eager for political reforms and they want to give a chance to the young chap, who appears to be following his father's policy and footsteps," he added.

While Prince Abdullah's political views and style of leadership are still untried, many Jordanians said the new Crown Prince appears to be a unifying factor for the Royal family after the change in succession as all his brothers, cousins, and two uncles stood by him.

Prince Hassan was seen on state television attending ceremonies congratulating the new Crown Prince. The new and former Crown Princes kissed and embraced. His cousin Rashed, the son of Prince Hassan, has appeared with Prince Abdullah at various meetings.

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Commodity prices may recover after '99

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Global commodity prices, battered by economic turmoil in Asia and oversupply, may start to rebound after this year but may never fully recover from current lows, the World Bank warned Wednesday.

The bank in a report issued here said prices for commodities such as petroleum, non-timber agricultural materials and metals are expected to decline further in 1999 in response to weak demand, large supplies and rising inventories.

Continued weakness in commodity prices will likely hurt countries that rely on raw materials, including the developing world and many of the world's poorest nations.

In the fourth quarter of 1998 energy price indices

were down 8.9 per cent over the third quarter, while non-energy prices were 0.7 per cent lower.

"Beyond 1999 we expect commodity prices to begin to recover, but the recovery is expected to be slow and very much dependent upon the growth in the world economies," the report predicted.

From 2000 to 2010, most prices should move off the depressed levels of 1998-1999, it said, but added: "In almost all cases, real prices in 2010 are expected to remain below the 1997 levels because of projected more rapid increases in supply than demand."

But the bank elsewhere argued that in response to the Asian meltdown, as well as to technological advances dramatically boosting output and liber-

alised market policies that lead to higher production, the world may be undergoing "a structural break in price levels."

"If we are experiencing a structural break in commodity prices, we would not expect prices to fully recover from current low levels," the authors said.

"Improvements in technology and more efficient operations do not erode quickly and their impact would remain even after the Asian crisis has ended," they added.

While global growth may edge up to 1.9 per cent this year from 1.8 per cent in the 1998, the study warned there remained "a substantial risk that the world economy will plunge into recession in 1999."

In 1999, as economic momentum cools in Europe

and the United States and emerging markets stay volatile because of weakness in Brazil and Russia, agricultural commodity prices are projected to fall five per cent.

Beverage prices could decline 12 per cent while those for agricultural raw materials are expected to slip two to three per cent.

Declines are also foreseen in oil because of high inventory levels and the reluctance of producers to curb output, as are prices for metals and minerals in response to weak demand and rising production.

In the troubled economies of Asia, the report noted, demand for commodities shrivelled as incomes fell and prices for imported goods rose after currencies were devalued in 1997.

The devaluations in turn

reduced the value commodities exported by those countries.

Prices were dealt a further blow by sharp increases in supplies.

Favourable weather conditions led to higher agricultural yields, exemplified by the grain sector where world production increased 10.5 per cent from 1995 to 1997.

Reacting to price hikes in 1993 and 1994, aluminium output jumped six per cent in 1996 and 4.5 per cent the following year, copper production gained 9.1 and 2.9 per cent and nickel output rose 11.4 per cent from 1995 to 1997.

Other factors leading to production surges were policy reforms and increased privatisation that offered incentives to increase output, according to the bank.

Consumers drain savings, fuel U.S. growth

WASHINGTON (R) — Consumers spent so freely through December that savings last year dipped to Depression-era levels, the government has reported, though it also kept a dynamic expansion rolling into 1999.

Total spending on goods and services jumped 0.8 per cent to \$5.96 trillion in December — the strongest monthly pickup since a one per cent rise in May — after a slight 0.2 per cent rise in November.

Though incomes also gained solidly, the spending rise was partly financed by dipping into savings that shrank at an \$8 billion annual rate or by 0.1 per cent in December after growing \$7.4 billion or 0.1 per cent in November.

For all of 1998, the savings rate slipped to 0.5 per cent — or one-half cent out of each dollar earned designated for savings — for the weakest savings performance since amid the Great Depression when savings contracted by 2.1 per cent in 1933.

But analysts discounted low savings, noting instead that confident consumers helped push the economy into a peacetime record 93rd month of growth during December and gave the laggard manufacturing sector a needed boost early in 1999.

Separately, the National Association of Purchasing Managers (NAPM) said its January index of activity climbed to 49.5 from a revised 45.3 in December. Production and new orders were up as were export orders.

Though the index

remained below the 50 per cent level that is taken to signal expansion, it was a significant rebound that showed the worst might be over for the industrial sector.

"It would appear that manufacturing has seen its low point, though Brazil may pose some problems down the road," said economist Lynn Reaser of NationsBank Inc. in Jacksonville, Florida.

She said robust domestic demand was tipping the scales toward a continued strong expansion at the same time the drag from weaker exports to Asia levels out.

"There was a real question whether problems on the manufacturing side, which is less than one-fifth of the economy, would pull the rest of the economy down," Reaser said.

"Now it appears that the other 80 per cent or so of the economy is pulling manufacturing out of its slump," she added.

Personal incomes climbed 0.5 per cent to \$7.284 trillion — the strongest monthly gain in 10 months since a matching 0.5 per cent gain in February — following a 0.4 per cent November gain.

Economist Mitch Stapley of Kent Funds, a mutual funds company, said strong stock-market gains clearly were bolstering consumer confidence and making them more willing to spend.

"We're seeing a strong 'wealth effect' from three or four years of 25 per cent returns in equity markets that is affecting how people view more traditional savings and spending patterns," Stapley said.

He noted that the Com-

merce Department excludes capital gains distributions of mutual funds in calculating personal income, making it harder to draw conclusions about softening savings rates.

In a third report, the Commerce Department said December construction spending increased by 1.7 per cent to a seasonally adjusted \$68.5 billion after a revised one per cent November rise. New homebuilding was especially strong throughout 1998, helped by low mortgage rates and further spurred by exceptionally mild weather late in the year that extended the construction season.

Reaser said she felt economic growth, measured by gross domestic product, could top three per cent in 1999 after last year's 3.9 per cent advance, which might be troubling to Federal Reserve (Fed) policy makers fearful of inflation.

"The U.S. economy now has very strong internal momentum with consumer spending strong and the construction sector very strong," she noted.

"The fact is the economy shows no sign of slowing down," Reaser said, adding that she thought the key reason for the Fed holding rates steady was for fear that raising them might hinder recovery prospects abroad, especially in Latin America.

The U.S. economy grew at a stunning rate of 5.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1998, closing out its eighth consecutive year of growth, the government said recently. This is the strongest pace of quarterly growth since the

second quarter of 1996, and was much stronger than expected.

The Commerce Department said gross domestic product (GDP) grew for all of 1998 by 3.9 per cent, the same as in 1997. Inflation meanwhile fell to its lowest level in decades under one measure.

The figures show that growth accelerated during the course of the year from 1.8 per cent in the second quarter — following a strike at General Motors' Delphi subsidiary — and 3.7 per cent in the third.

The GDP deflator, one measure of inflation, rose 0.8 per cent in the fourth quarter as compared to 1.0 per cent in the third.

Inflation using this measure was 1.0 per cent in all of 1998, down from 1.9 per cent in 1997. This is the smallest price increase since 1950.

Anthony Chan, the chief economist for Banc One Investment Advisors, said there are few signs of inflation in wages and prices to trigger the concerns of monetary policy makers.

"One of the most impressive aspects of this report is the fact that prices were so well contained. We have a miraculous situation where the economy has expanded above expectations, while inflation is coming in below expectations," Banc One's Chan said.

"This shows the economy has magnificent momentum going into 1999 and validates the notion that 1999 will be another non-recessionary year," he continued. The report was the

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 03-02-99 ACCESS 4646668											
CURRENCY	UNIT	JO	US	EURO	GBP	JPY	AUD	NZD	HKD	TWD	THB
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	1.8778	1.5389	0.1044	2.3343	0.2077	0.7080		
SAUDI RIYAL	5.2880	1.0000	1.0210	8.5485	7.1426	1.0300	12.3673	1.1004	3.7510		
UAE DIRHAM	5.1883	0.9735	1.0000	8.7443	7.4246	1.0089	12.1134	1.0778	3.6740		
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5225	0.1025	0.1050	1.0000	0.9793	0.1035	1.2431	0.1129	0.3450		
QATAR RIYAL	0.5438	0.1025	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000	0.1057	1.2384	0.1084	0.3417		
OMAN RIYAL	5.1438	0.9709	0.9912	8.6587	7.4246	1.0089	12.1134	1.0778	3.6740		
YEMEN DINAR	0.4284	0.0809	0.0828	0.8044	0.7878	0.0835	1.0000	0.0880	0.3033		
SOVIET POUND	4.8145	0.9087	0.9278	9.9407	8.5535	0.9800	11.2387	1.0000	3.4087		
LIBAN LIRA	21.4831	0.4549	0.4739	40.3405	34.5555	0.4739	50.1484	0.4621	15.2100		
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2686	0.2722	2.5522	2.2873	0.2746	3.2971	0.2934	1.0000		
BRITISH STERLING	0.8627	0.1627	0.1662	1.6188	1.5883	0.1676	2.0124	0.1791	0.9104		
GERMAN MARK	2.4358	0.4598	0.4694	4.5740	4.4793	0.4738	5.6880	0.5559	1.4588		
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.9605	0.3755	0.3834	3.7359	3.6586	0.3668	4.4442	0.4132	1.0988		
FRANCE FRANC	8.1894	1.5420	1.5743	15.3404	15.0228	1.5883	18.0700	1.8988	5.7839		
JAPAN YEN	1.5847	0.2991	0.3054	2.9758	2.8142	0.3081	3.6953	0.3292	1.1230		
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.7445	0.5180	0.5289	5.1537	5.0470	0.5335	6.4266	0.5701	1.8431		
SWEDEN KRONA	11.1350	2.1017	2.1458	20.9052	20.4764	2.1648	25.9527	2.3128	7.8836		
ITALY LIRA	24.1147	4.5516	4.6470	45.2822	44.3448	4.6882	56.2914	6.0087	17.0732		
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	50.2401	2.4528	2.4935	24.3871	23.8711	2.5177	30.7165	3.1531	9.5504		
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.1883	0.4149	0.4258	4.1280	4.0425	0.4274	5.1316	0.4596	1.2603		
RUSSIAN RUBLE	3.9891	0.7629	0.7867	7.4907	7.3357	0.7758	9.3119	0.9766	1.9400		
CYPRUS POUND	1.3774	0.5172	0.5280	5.1453	5.0388	0.5327	6.3983	0.6693	1.7181		
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.1373	3.2347	3.3025	32.1802	31.5141	3.3297	40.0041	4.2595	12.1332		
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1387	0.4037	0.4121	4.0180	3.9289	0.4158	4.9924	0.4442	1.5142		
EURO	1.2477	0.2355	0.2404	2.3430	2.2845	0.2428	2.9126	0.2992	0.8834		

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR											
CURRENCY	UNIT	JO	US	EURO	GBP	JPY	AUD	NZD	HKD	TWD	THB
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.8884	0.5789	0.7089	0.1729	0.8913	0.5146	0.8571	1.1320		
BRITISH STERLING	0.6104	1.0000	0.5538	0.4333	0.1055	0.5440	0.3141	0.4549	0.6089		
GERMAN MARK	1.7248	2.4328	1.0000	1.2163	0.2962	1.5570	0.8875	1.0100	1.9522		
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.4088	2.3079	0.8188	1.0000	0.2435	1.2554	0.7249	0.8204	1.5943		
FRANCE FRANC	8.7839	8.4764	3.3538	4.1082	1.0000	5.1550	2.9788	3.3874	12.0104		
JAPAN YEN	112.2000	183.0285	65.0598	78.8538	19.3985	1.0000	57.7417	65.1708	21.9969		
HOLLAND GUILDER	1.9431	3.1836	1.1267	1.3795	0.3360	1.7118	1.0000	1.13612	2.1996		
ITALY LIRA	17.0732	27.5727	9.9000	12.1207	2.9918	15.2167	6.7864	1.0000	19.3985		
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	35.3700	58.2778	20.6285	25.2520	6.1498	31.7023	18.3054	20.8382	40.2653		
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	1.5884	2.5500	0.8025	1.1048	0.2891	1.3872	0.8010	0.9112	1.7818		
RUSSIAN RUBLE	2.8243	4.6273	1.6377	2.0250	0.4883	2.5172	1.4535	1.7181	3.7346		
CYPRUS POUND	1.3774	2.1765	0.7268	0.9137	0.2354	1.0139	0.8442	1.1080	1.9400		
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.1332	19.8791	7.1285	8.8137	2.0877	10.8138	6.2442	7.1080	13.7346		
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5142	2.4009	0.8780	1.0750	0.2818	1.3496	0.7793	0.8889	1.7141		
EURO	0.8834	1.4473	0.5122	0.6271	0.1527	0.7873	0.4546	0.5741	1.0000		

WORLD STOCK MARKETS											
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS				CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN		
FRANKFURT	DAX	5189.87	5190.82	-23.95	GOLD	ASR	USD	USD	US DOLLAR	ASK	BID
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	9418.85	9402.72	-42.87	SILVER	ASR	USD	USD	BRITISH STERLING	1.1572	1.1530
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6013.00	6012.40	-0.60	PLATINUM	351.50	353.50		GERMAN MARK	0.4102	0.4122
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTRIAL	9274.12	9245.70	-71.58					SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.1233	0.1229
NEW YORK	NYS COMPOSITE	894.10	897.46	-3.36					JAPAN YEN	0.0095	0.0097
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	709.83	712.61	-2.78					HOLLAND GUILDER	0.3440	0.3460
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1281.89	1279.03	-2.86					ITALY LIRA	0.0414	0.0418
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	14181.31	14348.83	-168.52					EURO	0.8022	0.8063
PARIS	CAC 40	4243.57	4203.82	-40.35							
FRANKFURT	COMPOSITE	4851.29	4851.29	0.00							

BritishBank staff get rewards for exceptional performance

HSBC BritishBank is proud to announce that several of its staff members were recently rewarded for their exceptional performance, through the Shuhuan programme. This programme is a way for HSBC BritishBank to say "Thank you" to its staff. Fast, friendly, efficient and flexible: that's how the HSBC BritishBank wants to be known, so we aim to award people who have that "special something" that sets us apart from the crowd. Headquartered in London, HSBC Holdings plc is one of the largest banking and financial services organisations in the world. At 30 June 1998, HSBC had assets of \$484 billion, shareholders' funds of \$27.5 billion and a total capital ratio of 14 per cent. Its international network comprises more than 5,500 offices in 79 countries and territories operating in Asia Pacific region, Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa.

InterContinental Hotels and Resorts appoints new BR.V.P.O. Jordan

RAYMOND KHALIFE, Area President of InterContinental Hotels and Resorts, Middle East and Africa, announced the appointment of Hans Werner Olbertz, as Regional Vice President-Operations Jordan and General Manager of the Hotel InterContinental Jordan.

Prior to his appointment Olbertz was Regional Vice President Operations Egypt and General Manager of Semiramis InterContinental in Cairo. He brings with him more than 30 years of hotel experience, and has held several executive positions in his 25 years tenure with InterContinental.



THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Cuban poet
- Unit
- Impulsively
- Of an insurance job
- "Rebel without a Cause" co-star
- Crisp dessert
- Bowler Dirk
- Mass calendar
- Messie and Winn
- 4d.accent
- Reverse pic
- Small pianos
- Mil. address
- Compass dir.
- Light brown
- Aeronautics watchdog grp.
- You to Yves
- Impudently bold
- Dishwasher's assistants?
- Johansson or Sternmark
- Prostitute in tempo
- Xylophone's cousin
- 17th-century actress Gwyn
- Singer Zadora
- Core
- Magnon
- Possessed
- Swiss peak
- Most profound
- 4 of dates
- Nob Hill cops: abbr.
- Hindu title
- Chinese poet
- Farm towers
- Beauty salon treatments
- Barceloia's "Maria"
- Long snakes
- Crowspe
- Segal novel

DOWN

- Alexander and Roberts
- Earth pigments
- Pig out in Piccadilly
- Continental prefix
- Tumbler's pad
- Circle segment
- Long, narrow inlet
- Already claimed
- Region in the Balkans
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- Zero in the loss column
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- Like pipes and flowers
- Biblical stories
- Wrestler
- Under the skin
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- Magie of baseball
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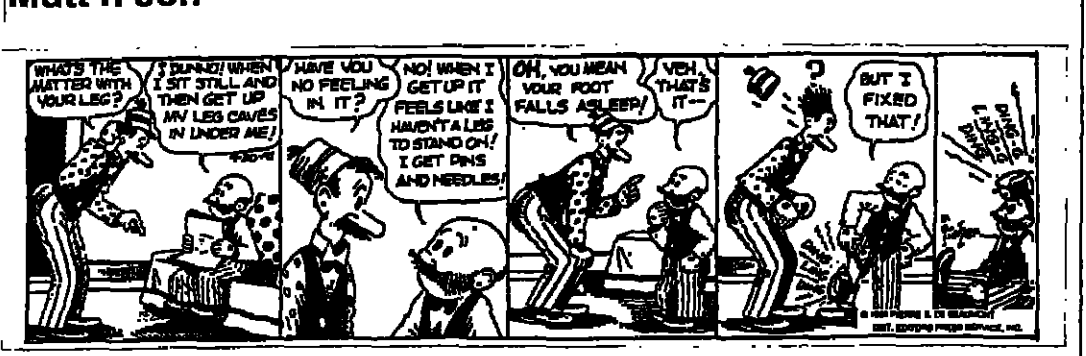
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Reestimation of annual rent value of buildings, lands will be conducted from beginning of next year

**** THE MINISTRY** of Finance is striving to fulfil the decision of the Cabinet which approved conducting a reestimation of the net value of annual rent of buildings and lands within the boundaries of municipalities in all governorates starting the beginning of next year, the ministry's secretary general has announced.

Secretary General Ra'fat Alami said this measure will be carried out in light of the many changes which occurred on buildings and lands as a result of construction expansion and the setting up of new municipalities. Consequently, he added, the rent value for residential buildings varies and makes a reestimation necessary

to achieve equality between all taxpayers in the society. The latest comprehensive reestimation took place in 1984.

Alami said the most advanced administrative and technical methods will be used in this process in addition to computers noting that the ministry will be training the committees which will be taking part in the reestimation task. Furthermore, the ministry will be taking all the steps to ensure that the process will be conducted smoothly, quickly and accurately to be able to complete the job within the specified period estimated to last for about 16 months (Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i).

Customs department improves efficiency by raising revenue to JD718 million

**** REVENUE FROM** customs reached JD718 million last year, JD40 million or six per cent more than the amount recorded in 1997, said Nazmi Al Abdallah, the director general of the Department of Customs. He attributed this unexpected rise to improved efficiency at the department especially when imports have noticeably declined and no new fees were levied.

The largest portion of the revenue came from the sales tax and customs fines for a total of JD640.5 million, 10 per cent more than the JD580 million

revenue registered in 1997.

Al Abdallah said the department will be setting up a directorate for "value and combatting commercial cheating" to follow-up on prices of goods and to analyse them. "The outcome will then be forwarded to customs centres which, in light of available information, will either extend or refuse to provide the facilities based on the behaviour of those who deal with the department and the extent of their abiding with the laws and regulations.

Goodyear allies with Sumitomo Rubber

NEW YORK (R) — Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Co. said Wednesday it was entering a global alliance with Japan's Sumitomo Rubber Industries Ltd. and laying off as many as 2,800 people, or three per cent of Goodyear's workers, in a major overhaul aimed at making it the world's leading tyre maker.

Goodyear also reported that fourth-quarter net income rose to \$122 million from \$2 million a year ago, easily beating Wall Street expectations. Worldwide sales slipped to \$3.2 billion in the quarter from \$3.3 billion the year before, the Akron, Ohio-based company said.

Goodyear shares rose \$2.125 to \$52.375 in morning trade on the New York Stock Exchange.

The global alliance, based on a memorandum of understanding signed by Sam Gibara, chairman, chief executive and president of Goodyear, and Naoto Saito, president of Sumitomo Rubber, is subject to approval by each company's board of directors.

To demonstrate both parties' commitment to the overall relationship, establishment of a cross-shareholding is planned.

Goodyear plans to acquire a 10 per cent interest in Sumitomo Rubber and the Kobe-based company plans to acquire an equivalent dollar value of Goodyear shares. The U.S. tire giant said it will make a balancing cash payment of \$936 million to Sumitomo when the joint ventures are in effect.

The transaction will be immediately accretive to Goodyear as earnings per share, the company said. In addition, cost improvement and rationalisation will add a combined estimated \$300 million-\$360 million to the profits of the joint ventures during the next three years, and Goodyear sees total annual sales increasing by \$2.5 billion.

In Japan, Sumitomo Rubber will own 75 per cent of two joint ventures and Goodyear will own 25 per cent. Voting rights will be shared 70-30.

Goodyear said the reorganisation, which involves closing its plant in Gadsden, Alabama, by the end of the year and laying off 2,500-2,800 workers, would yield \$100 million-\$150 million in savings. Goodyear said it sees one-time reorganisation costs also of \$100 million-\$150 million.

Its alliance with Sumitomo and sweeping reorganisation come in response to the economic volatility in Latin America, the on-going Asian economic flu and inefficient operations in North America.

To cut costs, Goodyear said it will end tire manufacturing operations at its plant in Gadsden, which dates back to 1929 and is one of its five largest worldwide.

The company said it would shut the plant's tyre manufacturing by the end of the year, but workers will continue to mix rubber to be used at other sites. Goodyear will transfer production from its Gadsden plant to other U.S. plants that operate seven days a week at full capacity.

French company awarded contract to manage Amman's water sector

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government recently announced that it has awarded a \$55 million contract to a French firm to manage Amman's water and wastewater network.

Water and Energy Minister Hani Mulki said the French company, Lyonnaise des Eaux, the water division of Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux Group, will also train Jordanians in the management of this important sector.

The 51-month contract will provide water and wastewater management and maintenance to the Greater Amman Municipality. The company's objective is to improve water distribution by

reducing leaks and other losses in the existing water network.

Illegal use of water reportedly costs the treasury JD15 million in losses every year. The government estimates that more than 50 per cent of water intended to supply the country's citizens is lost annually to both a worn out water networks and illegal water usage.

The World Bank has granted a \$55 million loan for the duration of the contract to cover capital investments to rehabilitate existing water plants and networks and restructure the water services.

Jordan's population is expected to increase from 5.3 million in 2000 to more than

eight million by 2020 — a factor which will severely strain the country's water resources.

To prevent water shortage, the government is looking for more efficient use of water for both drinking and irrigation purposes.

The Greater Amman Municipality represents 45 per cent of the country's total drinking water consumption.

Mulki has signed an \$800,000 agreement with a local firm to dig two deep wells in Karak in order to examine the quality of the 30,000-year-old Disi aquifer, as a possible source of water.

Last October, the government solicited 51 local, Arab and foreign firms to pre-qualify for the \$730 million project on a build, operate and transfer basis to draw water to Amman from the Disi aquifer in the south of the country.

Mulki later announced that the World Bank appeared willing to guarantee the amount of money in loans to be obtained from commercial banks to help finance the project.

The Disi-Amman conveyance system will be transferred to the government after 20 years. It will entail drilling wells, building a pumping station and a 325-kilometre water pipeline from the Disi aquifer to the capital for the delivery of 100 million cubic metres by 2005.

Lautman: Changes in Jordan won't affect Israeli companies operating in Kingdom

THE CHANGES in Jordan, with the appointment of Prince Abdullah as heir to the throne, are not expected to affect Israeli companies operating in that country, Delta Galil chairman Dov Lautman said Monday. Delta is considered one of the Israeli companies most active in Jordan, with three garment factories in Irbid and another in Amman.

Lautman said Jordan's economic and social interests lay in continued fruitful cooperation. The Israeli factories, he said, provide employment for thousands of Jordanians. More than a thousand people are employed in Delta's factories alone.

Lautman said that, although he did not know Crown Prince Abdullah personally, his Jordanian partners said the Crown Prince was seen as continuing the way of his father, including fruitful, positive cooperation with Israel and Israeli companies.

"We're relaxed," Lautman said, "We're not in Jordan just due to the pro-Israeli regime. It's a matter of common economic interest, and therefore we have no cause for concern."

Some thirty joint ventures between Israeli and Jordanian companies are currently operating in Jordan, of which seventeen are textiles factories.

In this sector, the main activity is making-up in Jordan, and finishing in Israel, for products intended for export to the U.S. Fifteen of the ventures operating in Jordan export their goods to the U.S.

— Business Arena, Israel

VACANCY NOTICE UNICEF BAGHDAD, IRAQ ASSIST. PROJECT OFFICER (NUTRITION) GRADE-NOB

Purpose:

Under the supervision of Project Officer Health/Nutrition, contribute to NUTRITION programme design and implementation, evaluation of programme/project activities, data analysis and progress reporting. Ensure proper management, distribution and utilisation of UNICEF provided inputs, monitor changes in nutritional status of women and children and effective coverage of services. The programmes are supported by UNICEF and carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other related ministries.

Minimum Requirements:

- University degree in medical or nursing science with nutrition related postgraduate studies.
- Communication, analytical and training skills.
- Ability to work in an international and multicultural environment.
- Two years progressively responsible experience in public health and nutrition programme design, administration, monitoring and evaluation.
- Fluent in English and Arabic (Written and spoken)
- Knowledge of computer applications such as database, spreadsheet, Word processing and Windows required.

Only Iraqi Nationals can apply quoting Post No. IRQ99017.

Applications must be received by 15 February 1999

To: Asst. Admin./Personnel Officer, UNICEF Amman

P.O. Box 840028, Amman 11184, Jordan.

VACANCY NOTICE UNICEF BAGHDAD, IRAQ INFORMATION OFFICER GRADE-NOC

Purpose:

Under the guidance of Section Chief (Communication Officer) responsible for development, planning, implementation and monitoring of information and communication strategies, to support the country programme in Iraq. It aims to improve the national capacity to plan, implement and evaluate research-based communication approaches and participatory methodologies for the mobilisation of individual action for children's rights.

Minimum Requirements:

- Advanced university degree in information/communication.
- Ten years of experience in the relevant field of which 5 years in Emergency environment.
- Experience with UN/UNICEF an advantage.
- Ability to write clearly and concisely on the technical aspects of communication/information.
- Negotiating skills with all types and levels, from community to senior government.
- Proven ability to conceptualise, innovate, plan and execute ideas.
- Ability to supervise and direct staff.
- Strong analytical skills.
- Good knowledge of computer management and applications.
- Training skills desirable.
- Fluency in English and Arabic.

Only Iraqi Nationals can apply quoting Post No. 11862

Applications must be received by 10 February 1999

To: Asst. Admin./Personnel Officer, UNICEF Amman

P.O. Box 840028, Amman 11184, Jordan.

VACANCY NOTICE UNICEF BAGHDAD, IRAQ PLANNING OFFICER GRADE-NOC

Purpose:

Under the guidance of Planning Officer and Programme Coordinator, responsible for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the area based projects within the national programme in all areas. Contribute towards preparation of Situation Analysis including analysis of data, design, prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate assigned programme or specific project(s). Prepare sectoral documents for the Country Programme Recommendation and Plans of Actions. Undertake field visits to monitor programmes and conduct periodic reviews with counterparts. Participate in the development of workplan. Prepare programme/project status reports. Assist the Government in the development and/or introduction of new approaches, methods and practices in project planning, management and evaluation.

Minimum Requirements:

- Advanced university degree in Social Sciences or related field.
- Five years of progressively responsible professional work experience in project administration, monitoring and evaluation.
- Proven ability to conceptualise, plan and execute ideas as well as to transfer ideas and skills.
- Ability to research, analyse, evaluate and synthesise information.
- Ability to express clearly and concisely ideas and concepts in written and oral form.
- Good analytical, negotiation, training skills and ability to plan and organise.
- Good knowledge of computer management and applications.
- Ability to work in an international, multicultural and complex environment.
- Fluency in English and Arabic.

Only Iraqi Nationals can apply quoting Post No. 11268

Applications must be received by 10 February 1999

To: Asst. Admin./Personnel Officer, UNICEF Amman

P.O. Box 840028, Amman 11184, Jordan.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Everybody seems to want to tell you what to do today, and you ought to listen. It looks like they have excellent ideas. They can also support you with a plan you've already got going. Go ahead and pass the ball to the others around you who can help. They'll be glad to do that, and it'll make your life a lot easier.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The work that's been piling up can't be put off any longer. Look at the bright side. Something you're doing today could be like money in the bank. It might actually be money in the bank. You don't get to spend it now, but it's nice to know it's there and growing.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Somebody you thought you knew very well could surprise you today, and this surprise is a good one. Perhaps you could set up a little surprise of your own. What does your sweetheart really like? Dinner and a show? On a Thursday night? Why not? Life can be a daring adventure, but it's up to you to make it happen.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) If you can scrape the money together, you could make a good deal on a household item. Somebody else's dilemma could be your lucky break. If you're there with cash in hand, you could get it for pennies on the dollar. A little sleuthing is required. Start by letting people know all the things on your wish list.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) People may not think of you as the intellectual type, but sometimes you are, and this is one of those days. By doing a little reading on your own, you could finally understand what an expert is talking about. If you just get to where you can carry on a conversation with folks in the know, your own expertise will grow much more quickly.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You love to be of service to other people. You live your life so that other people can be happy, wealthy, healthy and even wise, but it wouldn't really be too wise of you to do that today — not if you still have to keep body and soul together. Go ahead and let yourself be generally rewarded for your efforts.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Today, you'll be able to talk people into doing just about whatever you want. But take care. The same is true the other way around, too. In other words, the person

you love and admire will be able to talk you into just about anything. Set a private place so you can follow through on those ideas.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) People will be in the mood to talk today. With a few leading questions, you should be able to find out whatever you want to know, and then some. Your local neighbourhood stool pigeons will be rattling on everybody else. Now that you know that's likely to happen, show a little caution. Somebody out there might be rattling on you.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your friends are coming up with great ideas today, and they'd love to help with whatever projects you've got going. So let them in on your predicaments, as well as your joys and successes. One of them will come up with just the idea you've been looking for. It's always easier to figure out somebody else's dilemma.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Looks like people are yammering at you to produce results quickly. Take care not to get reckless. Now that you've put the safety precautions in, go ahead and race full speed ahead to accomplish your goals. If you're smart, you can actually generate more profits with less work, but to do it, you'll have to use your secret weapon.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 18) You're always looking for ways to stretch your imagination, and you're always seeking new horizons to conquer, especially intellectual horizons. You wouldn't mind travelling a little today, either. You just want to stretch your legs and your mind, and everything else. Don't go too far today, unless you can get tomorrow off as well.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Looks like your love and maybe a little of your money could bring out the best in others. Do it in a way that encourages them to be strong and not dependent on you. A contribution you make could multiply exponentially. Don't make an investment that makes you feel good. Make an investment that produces results.

Birthstone of February:
Amethyst — Onyx

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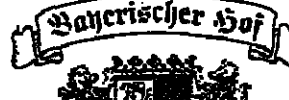
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Little support for Hoddle except from faith-healer

LONDON (R) — Sacked England coach Glenn Hoddle received scant sympathy on Wednesday and faith-healer Eileen Drewery blamed the media for his dismissal.

Hoddle, a devout Christian who believes in reincarnation, was forced to stand down on Tuesday for saying disabled people were being punished for the sins of a previous life.

A few hours before his fate was decided by the Football Association (F.A.), Hoddle's daughter Zara faxed a letter to the BBC pleading for understanding.

"If you would just take time to listen to what his explanation is then maybe you would understand a bit more. So, please consider it from my dad's point of view and hopefully everything will be back to normal soon," she wrote.

Hoddle told the Mirror newspaper: "I had managed to hold myself together throughout all this but that was the last straw."

"Someone told me Zara had written this note and I just started to cry," The Mirror was one of the few newspapers to offer any sympathy or support for the former England manager.

"The Mirror felt on balance that Glenn Hoddle should be allowed to remain in his job, but be barred from discussing his beliefs in public again," it said in an editorial.

The only other major backing for Hoddle came from Drewery, Hoddle's spiritual guru.

"It's a witch-hunt. The media were only interested in getting him out and they succeeded," she said in a television interview. "It would

have been impossible for him to carry on because of the media." She vowed to continue fighting on Hoddle's behalf, saying she had an "axe to grind".

The Times, which sparked the row by publishing the interview in

without him. "He had lost the support without which it was impossible to be the figurehead for the national game," The Times said in an editorial.

"He had failed to separate his rights of free speech from his duties

to quit, commented: "There could hardly have been a more shameful exit."

"Glenn Hoddle wasn't man enough to resign. He had to be booted out kicking and screaming, threatening to sue and blaming the media. Like a sent-off player arguing all the way to the touchline, he just made it worse." As Hoddle retreated from public view, the search began for a long-term successor to a job considered one of sport's most poisoned of chalice.

Ex-Leeds manager Howard Wilkinson, the F.A.'s technical director, will be in charge for next week's friendly game with world champions France.

Middlesbrough's Bryan Robson, Kevin Keegan of Fulham, Aston Villa's John Gregory and Hoddle's predecessor, Terry Venables, have all been floated as permanent successors.

However Keegan, the former England captain, ruled himself out on Wednesday, saying it was "the wrong time" for him and he wanted to stay with Fulham. Robson has already said he did not believe he had the experience for the job.

Arsene Wenger of Arsenal and Liverpool's Gerard Houllier have also been mentioned and on Wednesday the F.A.'s acting chief executive David Davies did not rule out the possibility of a foreign coach.

He told BBC TV there would be widespread consultations. "We will move as quickly as possible to get the best possible person," he said.

Wilkinson favourite to be Hoddle's permanent successor

LONDON (R) — Howard Wilkinson is 6-4 favourite to become Glenn Hoddle's permanent successor as England coach, William Hill bookmakers said on Wednesday.

Wilkinson, the Football Association's technical director, is in temporary charge for England's game against France next week after Hoddle was sacked on Tuesday for remarks about disabled people.

Odds:

6-4 Howard Wilkinson
4-1 Kevin Keegan
David Platt
6-1 Terry Venables
8-1 Bryan Robson
12-1 John Gregory
Gerard Houllier
Arsene Wenger
16-1 Roy Hodgson
20-1 Gus Hiddink
Martin O'Neill
25-1 George Graham
Alex Ferguson
Ruud Gullit
Bobby Robson

which he stated his beliefs about reincarnation, said on Wednesday: "English football, as well as English public life, will be better

as one of the most influential men in the game with vast influence over the young." The Sun, which had called for the England manager

Charlton sends out English SOS to foreign coaches

LONDON (AFP) — Former England great Sir Bobby Charlton sent out a save-or-sue SOS to foreign coaches on Wednesday following the ousting of Glenn Hoddle.

Charlton argued the Football Association (FA) should break with tradition and appoint the best coach available, regardless of nationality.

The FA appeared to agree, saying it would not rule out a foreigner in the post for the first time.

"There's nothing wrong with appointing someone who is not English," Charlton said. "All football fans in this country want is to be proud of their football team and to see it win."

Hoddle's contract was terminated on Tuesday after he was quoted in The Times newspaper last week implying that disabled people were being punished for sins committed in a previous life. He said he had been misrepresented.

Charlton, a member of England's 1966 World Cup

winning side, added: "The appointment should be made on merit."

Earlier David Davies, the English governing body's boss, asked if the job would be reserved for an Englishman, told BBC radio: "The only thing we are looking for is the best person for the job."

"I would not rule anything out in that direction."

Leading English contenders Bryan Robson and Kevin Keegan have already ruled themselves out of the race, and there appears to be no apparent heir waiting in the wings.

Many commentators have said the job is so high-pressure and English expectations so high that the role is almost impossible to enjoy, while others have pointed to the dearth of top home-grown candidates.

Howard Wilkinson, the former manager of English Premiership side Leeds, has taken over as caretaker manager.

Several top foreign candi-

dates have also been ruled out. Manchester United chairman Martin Edwards on Tuesday ruled Alex Ferguson out to replace Hoddle.

Liverpool's French boss Gerard Houllier also said he would not apply, saying: "It is out of the question."

Former England midfielder David Platt is another English name which has been thrust forward.

His departure as supervisor with Italian club Sampdoria on Tuesday coincided with Hoddle's sacking. Already there has been speculation that Platt could link up with Wilkinson.

Wilkinson is the only Englishman to manage a club side to the English Premiership title this decade.

Last year's championship was won by Arsenal, under Frenchman Arsene Wenger. Scotsman Ferguson, George Graham and Kenny Dalglish have also taken sides to the Premiership title in the 1990s.

Sammer on way back — Vogts

BONN (AFP) — Former European player of the year Matthias Sammer is poised to return to football after a year on the sidelines with injury, former German national coach Berti Vogts claimed in Sport-Bild paper. Vogts made the claim after a phone call with the sweeper who starred in his country's 1996 European Nations Cup victory in England.

Doping summit quickly reverts to minimum programme to keep semblance of unity

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — IOC officials conceded Wednesday the world doping summit would fail to finalize the creation of an international anti-doping agency or impose uniform minimum sanctions.

The inability to solve those two key issues ripped the heart out of the conference and left the IOC struggling to come to any concrete resolutions by the end of the meeting Thursday.

"Perhaps we can agree on the principle of an agency but at the end of the meeting you will not have an agency decided in detail," IOC drug chief Prince Alexandre de Merode said after two days of bitter dispute over who should lead the body.

"It is clear that it needs more study later," de Merode said, saying the issue could not be settled by Thursday's end of the meeting.

The goal of setting a mandatory minimum two-year sanction for serious drug offenses also faded under the pressure of major sports federations, who argued such bans would inevitably be struck down by civil courts.

The world soccer federation FIFA insisted it would never bow to a two-year sanction. The IOC relented.

"My response to FIFA is 'yes,'" said Judge Keba Mbaye, who headed an IOC group on the sanctions issue. He said FIFA would be allowed to apply suspensions under two years.

The IOC had threatened last year to kick federations out of the Olympics if they refused to back the proposal of a two-year ban.

Cycling had also questioned the wisdom of a two-year sanction.

Track chief Primo Nebiolo, representing the 28 Summer Olympic federations, offered a compromise proposal under which federations would be able to cite "exceptional circumstances" in applying bans of less than two years.

Marc Hodler, leader of the seven winter sports federations, backed Nebiolo's proposal.

The move to soften the two-year sanction upset leading athletes, including former

Olympic champions Johann Olav Koss and Sebastian Coe. "We have to hold our nerve, we have to hold the line," Coe, the British 1,500-metre runner, said.

Germany's Roland Baar, a member of the IOC's athletes committee, suggested soccer should be kicked out of the Olympics if it can't accept a two-year sanction.

"If soccer, or whoever, cannot accept the IOC rules, then they cannot be part of the IOC. It's a very simple thing," Baar said.

Meanwhile, finger pointing and raw criticism continued to dominate the meeting as much as calls for a unified stance on doping.

European delegates lashed out at the United States for making proposals for thorough reform, saying it was seeking the high moral ground while it was unable to control the doping issue at home.

"They should not take the others for being naive and small people," said French Olympic Committee president Henri Serandour. "They should stop giving us lessons. They want to appear whiter than white."

Former Olympic middle-distance champion Coe also criticized the U.S. position.

"I say to those countries you can have a contribution to make to the debate, but come to the table after you have first cleared your own backyard," he said.

Coe, gold medalist in the 1,500 meters at the 1980 and 1984 Olympics, cited the case of U.S. sprinter Dennis Mitchell. Coe noted that Mitchell escaped a doping ban on grounds that his positive test for testosterone was the result of having sex and drinking beer the night before.

"This stretches confidence and credibility to the breaking point," Coe said.

Even Hein Verbruggen, head of the world cycling federation (UCI), joined the criticism even though his sport has been widely discredited after the doping scandals at the Tour de France last July.

The IOC was scrambling to save its highly-touted world conference from failure on other fronts, seeking to revise



International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch speaks at the opening session on the second day of the IOC World Conference on Doping in Sport at the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne, Feb. 3. Plans for IOC boss Samaranch to run an international anti-doping agency appear to have been scuttled by the Salt Lake City corruption probe. Delegates at the three-day conference in Lausanne are instead demanding that someone outside the IOC take charge to ensure the agency's independence (AFP photo)

some of its maligned proposals. "They were projects, not decisions," said de Merode, adding compromises would be drafted during Wednesday's session.

Hopes that the doping conference would restore some status to the IOC were dashed almost as soon as the meeting opened. Some criticized the conference for being nothing more than a talk shop where little could be

achieved. "We are the biggest federation with 240 million members and we get three minutes to talk," said FIFA medical chief Michel D'Hooghe. "This is ridiculous."

The agency to coordinate random drug testing and other doping control matters around the globe was slipping from the IOC's grasp.

The United States and the 15-

European Union both objected to core issues within the IOC proposals forcing de Merode to give up any hope of finding enough compromise to set up the structure of the agency.

De Merode conceded the proposal on the doping of the agency was badly drafted and had caused unnecessary discord. "There were small errors in the document. It happens."



An athlete races to the finish line in the Men's Alpine Ski Event of the Asian Winter Games in Yongsong, Feb. 3. The eight-day long Winter Games comprises 43 events in seven sports with 1300 athletes, referees, officials and judges from 16 Asian countries (Reuters photo)

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PHILADELPHIA '1'		PHILADELPHIA '2'		PLAZA		CONCORDE		GALLERIA 1		GALLERIA 2		Hisham Yanes Theatre	
Bruce Willis .. in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi .. in		Comedian A'del Emmam .. in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi .. in		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria		SOON...	
MERCURY RISING		ALWAD MAHROUS TBA' AL WAZIR		AL ZA'EEM		TBA' AL WAZIR		THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY		LETHAL WEAPON 4		ILHAQ YA TARAWNEH	
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						CONCORDE '2' Sleepwalkers				MULAN			
						Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only				Shows: 3:30, 5:00			

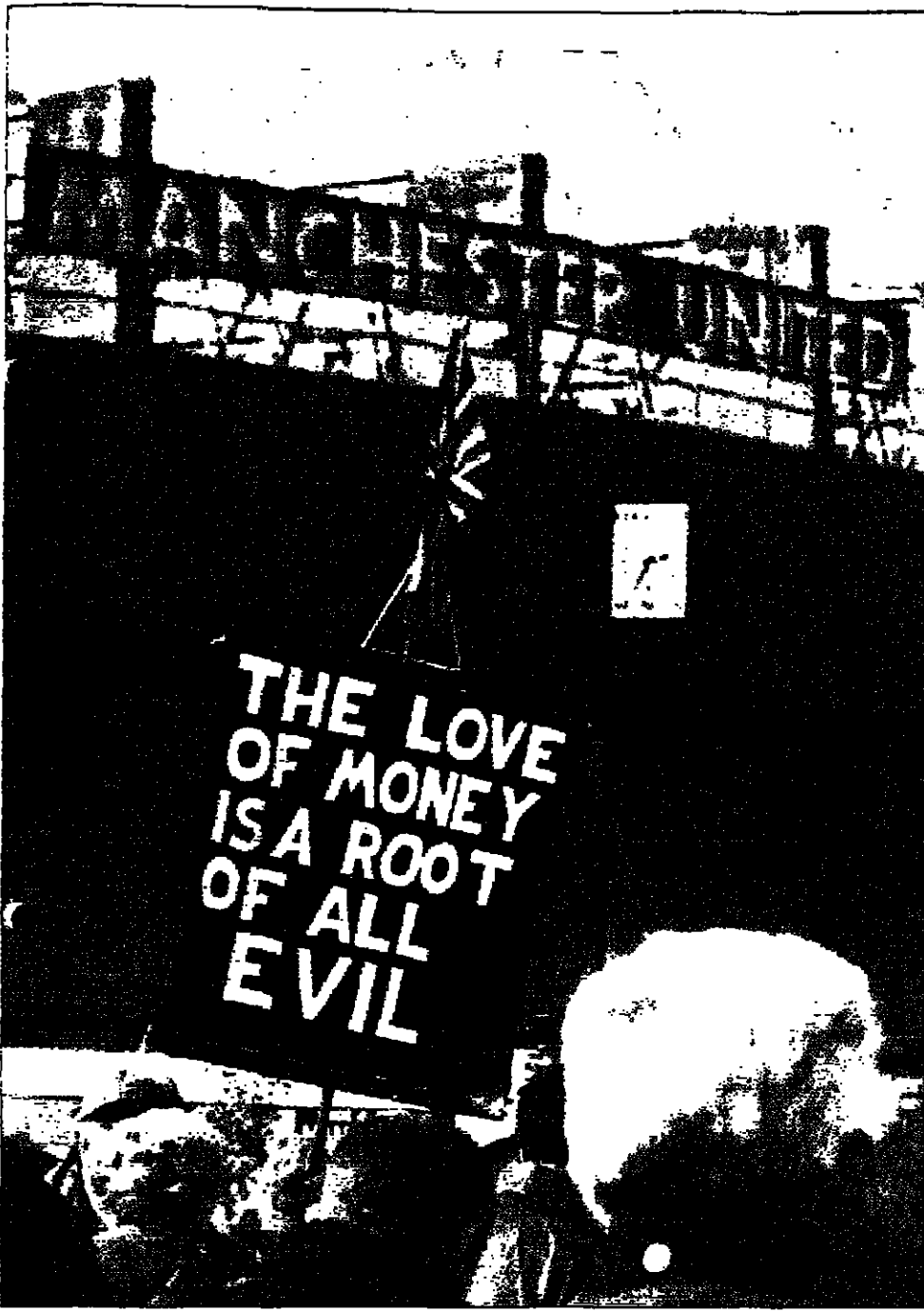
Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

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Sports

Manchester United is the richest club — survey



Manchester United is the world's richest soccer club, dwarfing the earnings power of its closest rivals in the Spanish and Italian soccer elite by a clear 30 million pounds (\$49.11 million), according to a survey published February 3. The English club generated 89.7 million pounds (\$146.8 million) in income from all sources in 1997. A protester holds a placard outside United's Old Trafford stadium in this September 12 1998 file photo, during the week after the BSkyB corporation announced a take-over bid for Manchester United plc (Reuters photo)

LONDON (R) — Manchester United is the world's richest football club, dwarfing the earnings power of its closest rivals in the Spanish and Italian soccer elite by a clear 30 million pounds (\$49.11 million), according to a survey published on Wednesday.

The English club generated 89.7 million pounds (\$146.8 million) in income from all sources in 1997, bolstered by shrewd marketing of perhaps the most famous "brand" in the game, said the survey by accountants Deloitte and Touche, who ranked clubs by their turnover for the season ending in 1997.

Of the top 20 world clubs, only Flamengo of Brazil in 11th place was non-European and most came from the lucrative Italian, Spanish and English leagues which, thanks to satellite TV and some of the world's best players, enjoy a global following.

Matt Tench, the editor of U.K. football magazine FourFourTwo, said Manchester United's marketing power, which allows it to generate more income from commercial activities than gate receipts, was quite remarkable.

"It's a mark of Manchester United's success that they can sell replica shirts to kids in the Far East who have never been anywhere near Manchester," he said.

Juventus, with a turnover of 53.2 million pounds (\$87.09 million), was the richest Italian club, in fourth place behind Spanish giants Barcelona, 58.9 million (\$96.43 million), and Real Madrid, 55.7 million

(\$91.16 million).

But Italian Serie A still yielded the most top 20 entrants, with Milanese clubs AC Milan, sixth with 47.5 million pounds (\$77.74 million), and Internazionale, 10th with 39.1 million (\$63.99 million) next best placed, followed by AS Roma in 15th, Parma 18th and Lazio 19th.

Recent European Champions Cup winners Borussia Dortmund came in seventh with 42.2 million pounds (\$69.06 million), but trailed ever-popular Bayern Munich as the richest German club.

The Bavarians ranked fifth with 51.6 million (\$84.45 million). Although the English Premiership produced five of the top 20, the wealth of Newcastle United, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal has been no guarantee of European football prowess.

The same is true of Scotland's Rangers in 14th, but Dutch club Ajax (17th) have also succeeded on the pitch with two consecutive 1990s Champions Cup final appearances.

Manchester United chairman Martin Edwards acknowledged the significance of business activities in attracting last year's 623 million pound (\$1.02 billion) bid from media tycoon Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, but said the team's commercial success stemmed from its phenomenal on-field performances under manager Alex Ferguson.

"Obviously we run the club very much as a business," he told reporters, "but everything emanates from the football side."

Mason out for season with elbow injury

FORT MILL, South Carolina (AP) — Already faced with playing as many as 20 games without leading scorer Glen Rice, the Charlotte Hornets learned Tuesday night that top rebounder Anthony Mason will miss the entire season.

Mason left practice Monday with what was originally diagnosed as a hyperextended right elbow. When the injury did not respond to initial treatment, he was sent Tuesday for magnetic resonance imaging test, which showed a ruptured biceps tendon.

Surgery is being recommended to repair the damage, and it likely will take 4-6

months for rehabilitation, said Dr. Glenn Perry, the Hornets' lead physician.

New center Derrick Coleman rolled his eyes when asked about Charlotte's chances of contending in the Eastern Conference without Mason and Rice, who is recovering from elbow surgery.

"There goes the season," Coleman said. "It's going to be tough. I was looking forward to getting out there and playing with those guys." Coleman, signed at the start of camp, was expected to play a complementary role on a team that advanced to the Eastern

Conference semifinals last season largely on the strength of Rice and Mason.

But Rice, who was sixth in the National Basketball Association last season with a scoring average of 22.3 points, underwent an arthroscopic clean-out procedure late last month after a bone chip was discovered in his right elbow. He could miss the first five weeks of the season.

Mason, who last season averaged 12.8 points and was seventh in the league with a rebound average of 10.2, hyperextended his elbow while battling through a pick in practice Monday.

Departed stars leave Bulls in dismal state

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Their dynasty demolished, the Chicago Bulls will open the National Basketball Association season Friday looking to the distant future with little chance of a seventh title in nine years.

Michael Jordan retired. Phil Jackson stepped down as coach. Scottie Pippen was traded to Houston. Steve Kerr went to San Antonio. Australian center Luc Longley went to Phoenix. Dennis Rodman is not coming back.

Even hope has hit the road.

"When you have as many new guys as we have, you understand its going to be an adjustment," new Chicago coach Tim Floyd said. "You have to think long term. You want young players to have carry over into next year. This year being a playoff team we didn't feel that was important."

Owner Jerry Reinsdorf and general manager Jerry Krause, blamed in part for pushing out Jackson and Jordan, will now have the chance to prove it was their management truly behind the Bulls' brilliance.

"They decided the best route to get back to a championship was to completely rebuild," Floyd said. "I have to believe in them." Ironically, the Bulls open against Utah, the same team Jordan and company defeated in last year's final and a team with almost everyone returning for back-to-back trips to the NBA Finals.

"You've got to be thinking, 'What the heck did I do to deserve this?'" Floyd said. "It's good from one aspect. It will allow us to identify our weaknesses."

Floyd will make his pro debut in a season shortened to 50 games with Toni Kukoc and newcomer Brent Barry as the top building blocks of a club seemingly doomed to live in the shadow of faded

glory. "If there ever was a good time to be bad, this is it," Chicago center Bill Wennington said. "You won't be able to be as bad as long as you would otherwise."

It might just seem like an eternity, warn rival NBA coaches.

"It's not going to be a fun atmosphere," Milwaukee coach George Karl said. "They have been winning for a long time. It will be tough."

"They could have looked at replacing Michael with somebody who could help," Portland coach Mike Dunleavy said. "Last time they lost him they still won 55 games. That's a lot."

"I wish they had stayed together because a true champion wants to go through the best," New Jersey coach John Calipari said. "The opportunity to go against some of the best players ever was an exciting challenge."

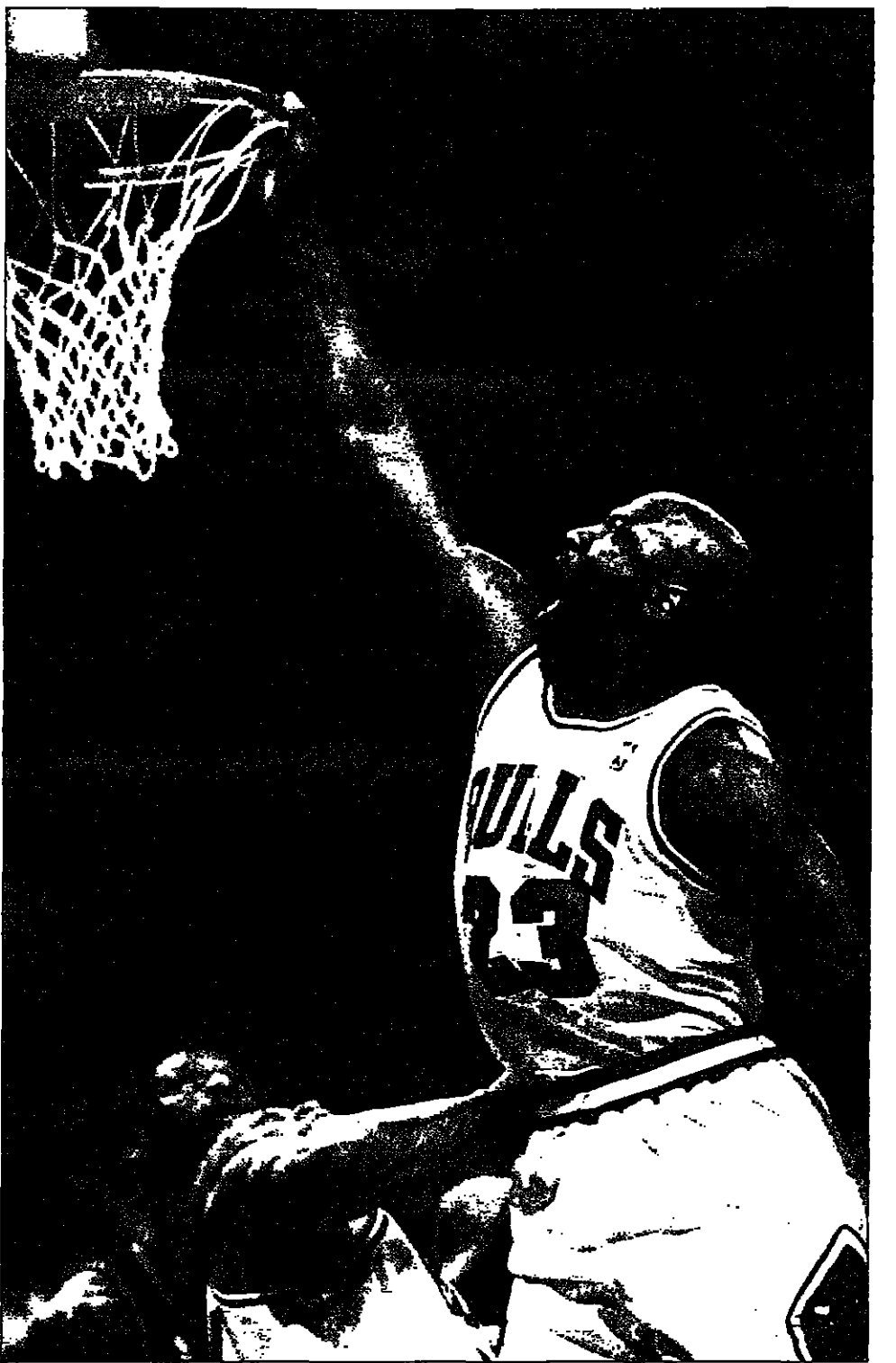
Rivals who cannot avenge themselves against a championship team scattered to the winds in the wake of Jordan's retirement might take revenge on whatever hapless folks happen to be filling Bulls jerseys.

"Michael and Scottie aren't in those uniforms anymore," Floyd said. "The incentive to put it to the Bulls may not be there 30 or 40 games into the season. But I'm sure it will be there early on."

"If the experts are right who have predicted doom for the Bulls, you would rather go through that in a shorter season. I'm not ready at this point to sell our team out and say we can't win some games."

But Calipari, who like Floyd went from the college coaching ranks to the NBA level, had some words of warning for Floyd:

"It's totally different. I mentioned that to Tim," Calipari said. "You can't



Michael Jordan (File photo)

prepare for it. You have to go through it. I called (college) my past life. I changed professions. So did he.

"The biggest adjustment for me was I didn't know

the enemy. It's like going to war and really being blind. I did my homework, but until you are in battle, you don't know how they are going to adjust to what you try to do. Everything was

new. "And the anxiety. Wow. It's like you're running down an alley that's pitch black and you know a wall is coming up but you don't know where."

Falcons want to show they're no one-year wonder

ATLANTA (AP) — Now comes the tough part for the Atlanta Falcons.

Sure, it was quite an accomplishment to make the Super Bowl for the first time in 33 years. Obviously, the "Dirty Birds" went a long way toward restoring the city's passion for pro football with their catchy nickname and funky dance steps.

But the thing that still eludes this franchise is consistent success.

The Falcons have never had back-to-back winning seasons, a point noted quite often by coach Dan Reeves even as he was guiding Atlanta to the NFC championship.

"We have an awful lot of things to be proud of," Reeves said, after an extraordinary season ended with a 34-19 loss to the Denver Broncos. "We've come an awful long ways. What we're trying to do now is fight for home-field advantage next year." No team has ever played the

National Football League title game on its home field. Next year, the Falcons have a chance to be the first when the Super Bowl comes to the Georgia Dome.

Atlanta took care of its first piece of offseason business Tuesday, making five players available to the Cleveland Browns for the expansion

draft: safety Chris Bayne, running back Harold Green, tight end Ed Smith, linebacker Ben Talley and offensive lineman Dave Widell.

Bayne, Green and Widell spent much of the season on the inactive list, while Smith and Talley had limited roles as backups.

In 1999, the Falcons can expect

heightened expectations, a tougher schedule and an already long-in-the-tooth team that will be one year older.

The defense, in particular, is starting to take on the look of the "Over The Hill Gang," with five starters who will be 32 years or older by the start of next season. Average age of the entire unit: 30.

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British Embassy
P.O. Box 87
Amman

Envelopes should be clearly marked "Employment - Bookkeeping". CVs should reach the Management Officer by 14 February 1999. Interviews will be held during the week commencing 28th February. Applicants who cannot make themselves available during that week should indicate this when submitting their applications.



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UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United Nations on Wednesday announced the withdrawal of all U.S. and British nationals from Iraq after the Iraqi government failed to provide written safety guarantees.

The announcement was made at a news briefing by U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard, who explained that in the light of an Iraqi threat last month, all but two of the U.S. and British nationals working in Iraq had already been pulled out in recent weeks.

The two remaining U.S. nationals, who are now to leave Baghdad, are the secretary of U.N. envoy Prakash Shah and the deputy head of a U.N. agency, Eckhard said. All British citizens have already been withdrawn, he added.

The U.N. decision came amid an escalation of incidents between the United States and Baghdad over U.S.- and British-patrolled no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq.

The decision stems from an official Iraqi warning on Jan. 4 that in the light of U.S. and British air strikes on Iraq in December, the government was no longer able to guarantee the security of U.S. and British nationals in the country.

U.N. weapons inspectors were pulled out of Iraq just before the air strikes last month.

A handful of U.S. and British nationals meanwhile worked with the 400-strong contingent of humanitarian workers in Iraq, who are implementing an oil-for-food programme with sanctions-hit Baghdad.

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OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Ahmad Tibi, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's political advisor, said Wednesday that he had been insulted, spat on and roughed up by right-wing Israeli extremists during a court appearance here.

Tibi, an Arab-Israeli, told AFP that the incident occurred Wednesday in a Jerusalem courtroom where he appeared to answer charges that he insulted an Israeli border guard a year ago.

A half-dozen right-wing Israeli activists who were waiting for him in court called him a "Nazi" and other insults, spat on him and scratched his neck, Tibi said.

His bodyguards tried to protect him as police stood by, Tibi said. None of the right-wingers close to the banned Kach movement was arrested.

"I was physically attacked

and the policemen did nothing," the Arafat adviser said. "I have filed a complaint. This is scandalous. How can extremists be allowed into a courtroom and the police disappear?"

One of those accused of attacking Tibi, Noam Federman, who has carried out a number of assaults on Arabs in the past, said Tibi was treated in "the best Kahane tradition," a reference to the assassinated founder of the anti-Arab Kach movement, Meir Kahane.

Tibi is accused of insulting a border guard from Israel's Druze community who wanted to search his car at a Jerusalem checkpoint. He allegedly told the policeman, "my shoes are cleaner than you."

Tibi has played an important role as an intermediary between Israel and the Palestinians since the launch of the peace process in 1993.

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THE HAGUE (AFP) — The Israeli airline El Al, whose cargo plane crashed in Amsterdam in 1992, immediately warned Dutch authorities that the jet had been carrying dangerous goods, an air traffic controller said on Wednesday.

Stef Koopmans told the parliamentary commission investigating the crash that El Al had telephoned the air traffic controllers at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport shortly after the plane fell from the sky on Oct. 4, 1992, killing 43 people.

They informed Schiphol that the plane was carrying inflammable and poisonous gases, explosives and munitions. Koopmans told the five-member panel.

He based his comments on a recording of the conversation. The cassette containing the information had been filed away in a safe for years and only brought out last month ahead of the hearings on the disaster, the Dutch news agency ANP reported.

Koopmans, director of operations at the airport's air traffic control centre, said that the information had been immediately relayed to Schiphol's management and to Dutch air safety services who were coordinating the rescue services.

The then-Amsterdam mayor Ed van Thijn said he was shocked at the news.

"This is totally new to me. I am baffled," he said.

Van Thijn headed one of the crisis centres on the night of the crash but asserted that rescue services had never been warned of the dangerous cargo on the plane.

"Several times during that evening, I was personally assured that no dangerous goods were on board. It is on the basis of that information that no extra protective measures were put in place," he told ANP.

"In the control centre, employees specialising in different areas were all in contact with Schiphol. In all cases, we were assured that there were no dangerous goods present," Van Thijn continued.

Amsterdam's rescue services refused to comment on the revelations.

During a parliamentary debate shortly after the catastrophe, then-Transport Minister Hanja Maij-Weggen made no mention of El Al's telephone warning and denied that the plane had been transporting dangerous goods.

Questioned by ANP in Brussels, Maij-Weggen denied that she had known about the harmful cargo and asserted that she had only been informed of the call just two weeks ago after the cassette resurfaced.

Since the accident, about 850 residents of the Bijlmer suburb have filed over 3,000 health complaints, reporting mental and physical illnesses that could be linked to the after-effects of the accident.

Israeli officials and El Al admitted on Oct. 2 last year that the ill-fated plane had been carrying 190 litres of dimethyl methylphosphonate, a chemical used in the manufacture of the deadly nerve gas sarin.

The El Al Boeing 747 cargo plane slammed into a building mainly inhabited by Surinam and Antilles immigrants in Amsterdam's southeastern suburb of Bijlmer shortly after take-off from Amsterdam-Schiphol airport on Oct. 4, 1992.

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senatives in the Iraqi capital and in New York had made "numerous verbal requests" for U.S. and British nationals to leave.

Although Iraq said that three U.S. citizens would be allowed to leave, U.N. security coordinator Benon Sevan "did not accept that security considerations could be applied selectively."

Eckhard said that as Iraq could not dictate the terms on which U.N. workers are sent to Baghdad, Sevan "recommended to the [U.N.] secretary general that all U.S. and U.K. nationals should leave the country as a matter of principle."

Secretary General Kofi Annan "accepted that recommendation," Eckhard said.

Sevan is also the official in charge of implementing the oil-for-food programme,

DUBAI (AFP) — A top U.S. envoy wrapped up a topple Saddam Hussein tour of the Gulf on Wednesday with a warning ringing in his ears of grave dangers posed by the American plot against Baghdad.

And in the Iraqi capital itself, a senior official dubbed the mission by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk a "failure."

Indyk's five-nation swing met a sobering end when the United Arab Emirates (UAE) defence minister pointed out the risks of Washington's much-vaunted plot to overthrow the Iraqi regime.

Sheikh Mohammed Ben Rashid Al Maktoum "voiced his reservations about the American stand," said the official news agency WAM.

"Any political change in Iraq brought about from the outside would lead to division and civil war," he noted.

Iraq believes stepped-up air strikes on Iraq followed the failure of efforts to muster Gulf support for the plot.

Escalation was "the direct result of the failure of the United States to intensify their plots against Iraq," said Salah Al Mukhtar, a newly-appointed Iraqi ambassador.

Indyk and his boss, Madeleine Albright, who visited Riyadh last week, "failed to secure backing for the U.S. plans" to overthrow Saddam, he told AFP. "That's why they have resorted to an escalation."

On Tuesday, U.S. and British warplanes attacked air defense sites in southern Iraq after coming under fire and an Iraqi anti-ship missile battery also came under attack, a new target for the coalition raids.

U.S. warplanes, responding to increased Iraqi defiance of the northern and southern exclusion zones, have carried out nearly daily attacks since a U.S.-British air war on Dec. 16-20.

Indyk left saying he had forged a Gulf-wide "consensus."

Regional leaders and the United States agreed action

rather than talk was needed, against Saddam, he told a press conference Tuesday night.

"Leaders here argue strongly that change needs to come from within Iraq and we agree with that," he said.

"They also made clear to us that they prefer that we talk less and do more, and we agreed with that," he said. "Our purpose is to support the people of Iraq in their efforts to change the regime."

The Emirati daily Al Khaleej was equally clear in urging opposition to the U.S. plans which it said were a "dangerous precedent — a flagrant violation of the U.N. Charter and international resolutions on Iraq which give no one carte blanche to overthrow the Iraqi regime."

Al Khaleej, which is close to the government, urged a united Arab position "to cut short the United States attempt to fish in murky waters."

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Indyk was repeatedly told by Emirati officials "the clear position of the Emirates which

refuse any meddling in the internal affairs of Iraq and believe that any change should come from the Iraqi people alone," Al Khaleej said.

Publicly, Indyk gave an assurance that "we will not seek to impose our will on Iraq nor will we seek to impose an outside opposition on the Iraqi people."

Most Gulf leaders agreed, he said, over the "continuing danger Saddam Hussein poses... [and] the need to take care of the basic needs of the Iraqi people while maintaining sanctions."

He said there was also consensus that Saddam "has been significantly weakened and an opportunity does exist" to remove him.

Indyk visited Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman as well as the UAE.

His open calls to oust the Baghdad regime also met resistance in Oman and Qatar where newspapers slammed the campaign.

Sultan Qaboos, who met Indyk late Monday in Muscat,

said he was "opposed to any interference in the internal affairs of others." The Omani ruler wanted an end to the eight-year embargo and a better life for Iraqis.

By the end of the tour Indyk appeared to tone down the overthrow calls and put the accent on the role of the Iraqi people, together with Iraq's neighbours and the United States.

He reiterated a triple approach to Iraq based on restoration of consensus in the Security Council, expanding the U.N. relief programme and work to change the Baghdad regime.

Meanwhile, Kuwait, the only country not to criticise Indyk's tour, ruled out the use of its territory for military training of Iraq's opposition.

The State Department has denied a Kuwaiti newspaper report of U.S. plans to set up camps in Iraq's neighbouring countries to train opposition fighters for a 10,000-strong "Iraqi Liberation Army."

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — San Francisco police have arrested a paraplegic man suspected of being a wheelchair-bound handi who recently robbed at least three people on the streets of Chinatown. Cuong Tran, 27, was arrested on Monday night and charged with one count of robbery and violation of his probation, police spokesman Sherman Ackerson said on Tuesday. Tran is accused of being the man who wheeled up to his victims, displayed or simulated a semi-automatic weapon, demanded money and fled in the motorised wheelchair. Ackerson said investigators believe Tran, who speaks fluent Cantonese, is a former gang member who was partially paralysed in a gang shooting.

AMSTERDAM (R) — The Dutch parliament voted to legalise brothels, swayed by arguments that proper regulation of the sex industry would help reduce trafficking in women, exploitation of minors and drugs crime. Only the opposition Christian Democrats and three small religious parties came out against the draft law, which now passes to the upper house for rubber stamping. If the reform becomes law, from Jan. 1 next year an estimated 2,000 brothels will be treated exactly the same way as any other business.

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Bob Eamigh's world travels include a tour of duty in Vietnam, but his long-lost high school ring has one up on him. After graduating from Altoona High School in 1965, Eamigh shelled out about \$50 for the gold class ring with a deep red stone, the school's insignia and

Jordan



UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United Nations Friday said it would try to fix an agreement between the P.N.G. Government and the Pales-
tine Government to occupy
the area.
The United Nations said in the
United Nations Daily News.
The United Nations initiative
was not acceptable to
the United Nations.
The United Nations placed
a demand for emergency
financial aid of the 185-
million dollar General
Emergency Fund was due
in 1972. The United Nations
binding the United Nations in the day
of the United Nations.
The United Nations
The United Nations issues
a new statement of
United Nations settlement
in the Arab lands, and
the United Nations in
the United Nations to the
United Nations. The United Nations
United Nations to civilian
population.

NABLUS, April 10. Hundreds of Jordanian demonstrators clashed with Palestinian police Friday during a protest march through Nablus in demand of the release of Islamic prisoners held in Palestinian jails.

Dozens of police armed with rifles tried to keep around 250 marchers — Hamas supporters and relatives of the prisoners — from marching from a local mosque to the centre of the city, witnesses said.

The protesters threw stones and bottles at the police, who eventually withdrew, letting the marchers hold a street rally in front of city hall before the crowd dispersed under a cold winter rain.

Another 2,000 protesters held a similar march through Hebron in support of prisoners in Palestinian jails, but that demonstration was called off without police intervention.

Marchers in Hebron held banners reading "Jail criminals, not heroes" and "No to

DUBAI (AFP) — Yemen's Interior Minister Hussein Arab has accused Britain of involvement in an alleged bomb plot by a group of British Muslims because they held extra passports, in an interview published Wednesday.

"We believe Britain is implicated in this affair," he told the Emirati newspaper Al Khaleej.

"We consider that our British friends are implicated... and we have let that be known to British officials. Until they clarify this affair, we consider them to be implicated," said Arab.

"Either Britain is implicated in the plan or there's a powerful and influential network which evades the British security services," the minister added.

He said the British suspects in the bomb plot in the southern Yemeni city of Aden held "two British passports in reserve, in addition to their own passports, in case they needed to use them."

"Only the state can provide

Visa privileges for Britons cancelled

SANAA (AP) — Angered that British passport holders may have been involved in terrorist activities in Yemen, the government announced Wednesday it would no longer issue visas to Britons upon arrival in the country. Deputy Foreign Minister Ghaleb Al Jameel said Britons wishing to visit Yemen now must obtain visas at Yemeni embassies before making the trip. Jameel said it was "a security precautionary measure following the recent events in Yemen which involved British passport holders attempting to kill other British passport holders." It was an apparent reference to five British men and a Frenchman who were arrested in December on charges of associating with armed groups, planning to commit murder and destruction, and possessing weapons.

reserve passports," said Arab.

Yemeni authorities have accused eight British Muslims, as well as two Algerians, of plotting to carry out several bombings in Aden on New Year's Eve, with the Anglican Church and a British consulate on their hit list.

Five of the Britons and one Algerian have been on trial since Jan. 27, the same day as the other suspects were arrested.

The suspects, according to Yemeni authorities, were sent

by a militant preacher based in London, Abu Hamza Al Masri, whose extradition Sanaa has requested.

"But there has been no reply from the British government," the interior minister complained.

"The British state seems to be adopting an attitude of non-cooperation with Yemen. At the same time, it asks Yemen to free its nationals and denies they are linked to terrorism," he said.

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit on Wednesday announced a nationwide crackdown on Islamist activity in a move certain to please the country's powerful and resolutely secularist armed forces.

Ecevit, a leftist deeply suspicious of political Islam in officially secular Turkey, told his MPs he would issue a circular the same day instructing the police and judiciary to take legal action against any threats to the secular order.

"Every state is obliged to defend itself...The government, local governors, prosecutors, judges and police have a duty to protect the state," he said.

Elections are scheduled for April this year and are shaping up into a bitter struggle between the powerful Islam-based Virtue Party and a handful of fractious secular parties.

Ecevit's phrases echoed documents released last month by the armed forces that said the Islamist movement aimed to subvert Turkey's secular code and said the country was justified in fighting Islamic activism.

Turkey has often been criticised by its Western allies for its poor human rights record and restrictions on freedom of speech.

"Activities that abuse or politicise religion will be opposed with determination," state-run Anatolia news agency cited the circular as saying.

Past crackdowns have led to prosecution of politicians and journalists deemed to have encouraged religious militancy by their statements, outlawing of publications and even the closure of parties.

The circular set up a central body to coordinate the crackdown and drew particular attention to broadcasting.

Complaints of radiation 'contamination'

LONDON (AFP) — Sixteen British ex-servicemen who served in the 1991 Gulf War have tested positive for depleted uranium contamination, a veterans' group claimed on Wednesday. The tests were carried out in Canada on samples sent by members of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association. The veterans claim depleted uranium (DU) poisoning, linked to U.S. and British use of depleted uranium ammunition during the Gulf War, is the cause of a variety of illnesses they have suffered since the war against Iraq. Shaun Rusling, from Hull, in northern England, who served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, said: "We have all been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic fatigue and other illnesses." "But our illnesses are not the result of PTSD, you have to look for the underlying illness which is causing these symptoms."

'Israelis for concessions in W. Bank'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A big majority of Jewish Israelis favour further land concessions on the West Bank to achieve peace with the Palestinians, but they are against any sharing of Jerusalem, according to a poll released Wednesday. The survey by the Tel Aviv University peace centre found that 68 per cent of those queried favoured ceding more of the occupied West Bank to Palestinian control. At the same time 84 per cent of Israelis questioned opposed any Israeli withdrawal from Arab east Jerusalem, which was also occupied in 1967 and then illegally annexed by Israel as part of its "eternal capital".

'Bonn will arrest Ocalan on arrival'

ANKARA (AFP) — German authorities will arrest fugitive Kurdish rebel Abdullah Ocalan if he sets foot on German soil, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said in a newspaper interview Wednesday. "He will be immediately arrested, imprisoned and put on trial. But I cannot say what verdict the court will give. The judiciary in Germany is independent," Fischer told the Turkish liberal daily Milliyet. "We would come up against serious political problems, but the issue would belong to the judiciary and not politics," Fischer said on the possible trial of Ocalan in Germany.

Former minister acquitted in mafia trial

ISTANBUL (AP) — A former cabinet minister was acquitted Wednesday of charges of aiding and abetting the mob, the Anatolia news agency reported. Eyup Asik resigned from the government in September when television stations broadcast his taped conversations with a leading mafia boss. The scandal eventually led to the collapse of the government of Mesut Yilmaz in November. The court ruled that the conversations did not constitute a crime. The acquittal means Asik can run in the local and parliamentary elections scheduled in April. He is a member of Yilmaz' centre-right Motherland Party. Yilmaz still faces a parliamentary investigation on his ties with the mob.

French lottery winner lost it all

PARIS (R) — Somebody in France won a fortune but never claimed it. The national lottery *La Française des Jeux* said on Wednesday that nobody had showed up to claim 45 million francs (\$8 million) won by a lottery ticket sold in northern Paris. The mystery provoked a frenzy of media speculation. Explanations varied on whether the winner had lost the ticket, left the country or had a heart attack on seeing the result. The 60-day deadline to claim the prize expired at midnight on Tuesday. A spokeswoman for the lottery said the cash would be returned to the lottery prize pool.

Scientists launch drive against superstition

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese experts will launch a campaign to raise scientific knowledge and combat superstition after results of a survey showed a resurgence in the popularity of fortune-telling, the official media said Wednesday. A report by the Chinese Association for Science and Technology said "a growing number of people have been resorting to superstitious methods such as fortune-telling when faced with problems in the emerging market economy." Most of those who practice superstitious beliefs were people in rural areas and who were less educated.

